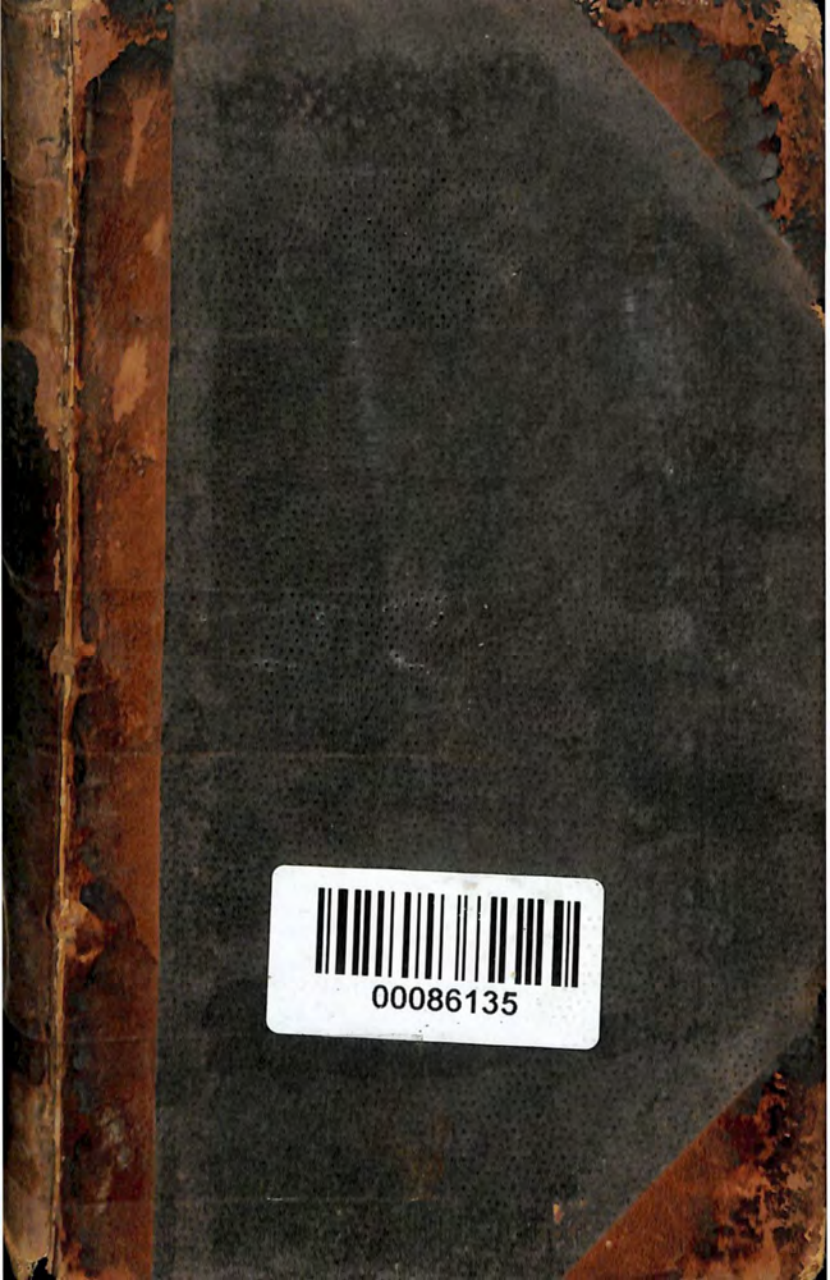
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SKETCHES IN THE PYRENEES;

WITH SOME REMARKS

ON

LANGUEDOC, PROVENCE, AND THE CORNICE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"SLIGHT REMINISCENCES OF THE RHINE," AND

"THE GOSSIP'S WEEK."

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101,	7,	..	Maubourquet	..	Maubourguet.
104,	11,	..	grove	..	grave.
109,	20,	..	fields	..	folds.
132,	*et seq.*	..	Serisse	..	Serisse.
145,	18,	..	cowslip	..	Cowslip.
162,	3,	..	vigour	..	rigour.
178,	11,	..	these	..	there.

SKETCHES IN THE PYRENEES,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

LUZ — PIC DE BERGOZ — VIEW FROM IT EACH WAY — LA COMPLAINTE DE MONTEBELLO — MY DOULCETTE MIGNONNETTE — GORGE DE LUZ — FEW STRANGERS IN THE PYRENEES, AND WHY.

BEHIND the village of Luz rises the lofty Bergoz,* terminating in a pic famous for the view which it commands. It is a green mountain, too steep in most parts for habitation; but where the slopes are gentler, its broad flanks are dotted with granges, whose summer inhabitants have already forsaken them. Higher up, we found flocks and herds browsing their way downwards; and the sound of their bells, so far from jarring against the dead silence that otherwise prevailed, seemed to

* Or Bergons, as it is also called.

make the presence of solitude more visible,—to add another chord of loneliness to her harp. The road, as usual the bed of a torrent, steep and stony, my chairmen preferred the grass even when the ascent was much more fatiguing, and this decidedly to avoid wetting their feet; a thing to which they are remarkably averse.

I have known others, from whom such delicacy might be as little expected, who also had this dread. A gallant officer who commanded the British army in a momentous battle, (not Waterloo,) told me that he never was so angry in his life as with a man, who in the heat of the engagement had pushed him into a pool: he was obliged to fight with wet feet, and dreaded his damp stockings more than sword or ball.

A beautiful look-down on the plains of Luz, and fine surrounding country,—increasing solitude, but at the top such a view! A hog's back, overlooking the basin of Luz in its green, and fresh, and quiet loveliness, and its grand and lofty surroundings; the gorge of Bastan going off at one side, with the Pic du Midi rising up behind it; that of St. Sauveur, deeply clefted in the mountains, hiding itself at the other; the valley of Argelez seen through

the narrow defile that unites it with the basin of Luz,—St. Savin, the chapel of La Pietà, and the town of Argelez visible, each on its cloudless elevation; the colouring gauzy grey, with light through it,—the pure soft grey of the Italian distance.

And then the press of mountains at the other side: the towers of Marboré, stretching from east to west; Mont Perdu a step behind blanched with snows, but too closely girded in by other mighties to be regally pre-eminent; the Brêche de Roland, with the sky of Spain looking through it—the true breach and the false; a sunbeam on the fall of Gavarnie, and a gathering of light on the soft basin of Pragnères, which opens just beneath us.

Between our perch and the amphitheatre of the Marboré, are the side-screens that rush downwards in grand continuous slopes; their broad flanks covered with wood or pastures, or furrowed with rocks, down whose rugged gullies the wild fall, or wee rattling stream, courses along unobserved among so many objects of higher interest. The combination is grand, and grave, and splendid; solemn from the magnitude and power of each

single feature, and the simple and sublime way in which they are put together; solemn too from the profound stillness, but with a fine radiance on the snow and in the sky,—the pale bright sky that covers them. The green pastures of the Comélie, and the soft plateaux of the near mountains, offer the most splendid tinting; but on the one which is closest to the eye, looking to the left, there are broad sweeps of juniper, contrasting its peculiar green with the more grassy verdure of the short herbage, that produce an effect of colouring which I have rarely seen equalled. From the pic beyond the ridge, the view is more extensive, the eye has freer scope; but the single pictures, taking each in its separate frame, have perhaps a more direct effect upon our sympathies. In the inside of this mountain is a cavern, inhabited by a crew of industrious fairies, famous spinners and most obliging ones, as the housewives here well know; for they have only to leave a bundle of flax at the entrance of their under-ground dwelling, and on returning are sure to find it converted into a beautiful, even thread, such as their fingers never could have produced. The difficulty is to find the opening of the cavern.

A shepherd brought us milk in a wooden can, with a ladle floating on it; so we sat down on the turf to do it justice—for it was excellent—leisurely. One of our men, who had served (as all have who are over forty) in the imperial army, and had been present at the death of Maréchal Lannes, asked leave to sing for us *La Complainte de Montebello:* the verse was as rude as the music.

"Dans une heure d'ici
Vous perdrez votre ami,"

said the dying marshal to the emperor, who held his hand,—at least so goes the ballad, and so sang the old soldier in a broken and dolesome voice that never had had music in it; but his comrades, who were clustered together on a small mound, while the singer sat a little apart and turned from them, listened with profound and most respectful attention, in which a sentiment of melancholy was obviously mingled. And, indeed, though the verse was rough, and the measure drawling, and the voice

"Full of harsh discords and unpleasing sharps,"

yet there was still something touching in the death-song of the illustrious warrior, doled out as it was

in a mountain solitude, by one who had served with him, and seen him die on the field of battle.

While we reposed, herds of cattle browsed below us, and the mountain horses played wild gambols, scouring rapidly round in one direction, then suddenly striking the earth and wheeling off in another. Two hawks floated gracefully above, crossing and recrossing each other; sometimes descending with a sweeping motion, then rising sunwards, and after a moment's eclipse, re-appearing as if chasing something invisible down towards the earth; while their shadows swept over the sunny turf, doubling their buoyant and beautifully balanced movements. As we returned, the sun had got a little behind the mountains, and threw forward their headlong shadows on the satiny surface of the pasture slopes, whose closely nibbled turf had not a knot in it. The effect was admirable; nothing intercepted the stationary reflection of the mountains themselves, and within their darkness the ruminating herds fed or reposed, with a seeming sense of peacefulness not shared by the frolicsome troop who still remained outside in the sunshine.

From that part of the mountain descent where the road forms a terrace elevated above the vil-

lage of Luz, the basin is seen to great advantage. It appears from thence of a triangular form, and the wood, which from below shows itself in spare trees too freely lopped of their branches, and dotted about singly, or planted in thin hedge-rows, is thrown by a change of position into masses at the base of the mountains, making rich bodies of shade and colouring. The look-down is of exceeding sweetness, the basin itself green as Eden, and watered by innumerable bubbling rills; the Gave of Gavarnie, beautiful as any of the four rivers of paradise, winding through the meadows, the torrent of Bastan hastening to unite its stream with that of its lovely neighbour, and then—being made one—shooting off through the defile of Luz to loiter amongst the meadows of Argelez; first taking the wild flood of Cauteretz, there sobered into gentleness, into its sweet co-partnership. To the right, the château of Sainte Marie on its rocky platform—iron-stained and mellow; the town below with its glistening roofs of purple slate; higher up the hamlet, higher still the grange; and above, the summits of the mountains that shelter and enclose all.

Ronsard wrote a hymn to the lark, and called it

Doulcette Mignonnette; and there is a pretty little bird here, with an almond-green shade, or rather light, through its feathers, that answers to the name as if it was made for it. It pee-wits in such a melancholy key—yet so sweetly, hopping beside us, or making short flights from stone to bramble, with such pleasant, gentle friendliness, that I would set it to verse if I could. My chairmen have no name for it, and wonder at my asking for one. "C'est un petit oiseau," is the only answer I have ever been able to obtain to all my questions about the small voices of the desert, to which I have so often listened with curiosity and a certain unworldly, but not undelightful feeling, when I have heard their pretty matins, or sweet chirping vespers, in the solitudes of the forest.

I never saw any thing like the streams in this basin of Luz; such swelling, living crystal; so pure, swift, and abundant. A night of rain may have helped them, perhaps; but as, probably, they (like most of the Pyrenean rivers) run over granite or marble, not a soil of earth stains their transparency. A peasant stoops down at this moment, and scoops up a purl in the hollow of a

leaf,—being thirsty, I envy him the draught; the bright Falernian sparkling in its preciously wrought cup of calcedony would seem less tempting to my fancy. The man thinks otherwise; for he just cools his lips, and throwing away the rest, turns up a face that looks as if it had been hacked out of a piece of oak, and casts a piteous look, though a joking one, at my chairmen, who nod assent to his implied disrelish.

The gorge of Luz was glorious, as we returned this evening; every branch brought out, every leaf defined, every shadow helping a light, and the beauty of individual form radiantly outlined, without hindrance, or rather with great assistance, to the breadth and splendour of the general effect.

Again at Cauteretz. The more I see of this beautiful country, the more I feel surprised at its being so little visited by ramblers from other lands. Here are no Russians,—at present (except our own countrymen) the most universal travellers; no Germans; and as representatives of Great Britain, only two gentlemen and their wives, temporary residents at Pau, and ourselves. Sometimes—though rarely, an Englishman appears at the

Cercle, but none seem to remain more than a day; while every nook, meritorious or otherwise, in Switzerland, is brimful.

The reason is, that every one goes to Italy, and almost every one goes to it through Switzerland. If the allurements of Spain were as powerful in the opinion of the general run of travellers as those of Italy, and the facilities equal, the Pyrenees would have been already sifted to their last grain. But sooner or later, this delightful country will be sought for, for its own sake; and those who, travelling now along the southern coast, send an uninquiring look towards its lofty mountains, will turn into and overflow its land; and its beauties which are now, though justly vaunted, little known out of France, except to invalids, a few picturesque travellers, and a still smaller number of ardent naturalists, will then become, like other beautiful things, the pasture of the general herd, open alike to the profanation of bad taste and the incense of poetic feeling.

Whenever this shall happen, those who at present deny to France the possession of really fine and picturesque scenery, will be forced to retract

their hasty or prejudiced judgments, and compelled to allow, or won over to feel, that the landscape of the Pyrenees is not only relatively, but virtually and most eminently beautiful; and that it does not owe its power and charm to the force of contrast, but to its own intrinsic dignity and native loveliness.

CHAPTER II.

THE COMING DOWN OF THE SHEPHERDS—FETE OF THE ASSUMPTION—THE NOTE OF PREPARATION—BALLADINS —DISCREET GAIETY — CORNEILLE AND RACINE PERFORMED IN THE PYRENEES — AUTUMN PERCEPTIBLE BEFORE IT IS VISIBLE—CHATEAU DE BEAUCENS—CHARACTER OF THE SCENERY — EFFECT ON THE MIND — THE RUINS—THE CHAPEL OF BEDOURET—ST. ORRENS.

"STAY another week," has been more than once said to us, "and you will see the shepherds returning from the high pastures with their flocks and their dogs, sole companions of their lonely sojourn in the mountains; you will hear the music of their pipes, and witness their meetings—after five or six months of utter solitude—with their families and friends." What images of pastoral and patriarchal life did this simple picture present! what Bible recollections did it draw out from their hiding-places! we talked of nothing but the coming of the flocks, and looked out for them as

children do for the Hallowe'en, or the twelfth-night gambol.

Yesterday evening the sound of sheep bells, approaching from a distance, came suddenly upon us. What could it be? It was yet some days to the expected one; but looking from my window, I saw the sheep descending the hilly street just as they do in the journeys of the patriarchs in the old tapestries, each flock accompanied by a guard of fierce dogs, of that superb race peculiar to the Pyrenees, and every shepherd armed with a short club: good against wolves, we thought, but of course a mere club of parade on the present occasion.

The sheep were fat, the tones of their bells deep and sonorous, the dogs magnificent, and the shepherds like the shepherds of Sechem. There was no pipe, it was true, no household or heartfelt greeting, no long look-out with love and joy in it for those who had tarried behind: but at the moment we scarcely missed these auxiliaries; the bells made their own sweet music, and there was something simple and antique in the scene which became its grave complexion. Suddenly a shepherd sprang from behind the ranks, and, brandish-

ing his club, levelled a blow at another who was a step or two before him: it was returned with fury, and in a moment the aggressor was laid prostrate. He rose instantly, covered with blood: I closed my window, but the cries and sounds of blows came through it. At length the gens d'armes appeared, separated the combatants, and conveyed them both to prison; and thus ended part the first of the pastoral drama, and the only scene of violence which has been enacted this season in the mountains.

To-day is the fête of the Assumption, the grand fête of Cauteretz, the fête of the balladins, of the chairmen, in short of all those who wish to partake of its gaieties. The programme is superb—games, races, *mat de cocagne*, &c.; then come *les ballades*, "Messieurs les balladins," as they are respectfully styled in the setting forth, will arrive at three o'clock in separate bands, each band attired in the costume of its district, and preceded by instruments of music. Prizes will be adjudged to the most agile dancers, after which various feats of activity are to follow; then fire-works in the mountains, and last of all a ball. No attraction, in short, left unemployed, (gratis plays and pudding ex-

cepted,) which the fête of St. Louis, or St. Charles, or St. Philippe, could hold out at Paris itself.

At an early hour this morning the note of preparation sounded from all quarters; large boughs were placed before the houses, tri-coloured flags floated from the windows, drums were occasionally heard, servant girls ran to and fro with water-pots and fish-kettles, and others passed already dressed for the day,—smart and showy, not tawdry, as our girls are sure to be when they mix two colours; but here, as elsewhere, I have made the remark, that young females in the humbler classes of life never become a holiday dress so well as a neat working one; not being every day wear it sits stiffly, and besides gives pretensions always awkwardly supported. A fine girl, whom I have often noticed as conferring dignity on her madrass, has just passed in a full once-a-year toilette: as a thistle she was very stately; but vanity would make an artichoke of her, and nothing can be more hard and sticky.

The balladins of the neighbouring districts have proved faithless, and declined entering the lists; so the pig, sheep, goat, and handsome piece of broad-cloth, which were to have been contended

for, fall without opposition to the children of the soil, who, equipped in white trowsers, scarlet sashes, and blue berrêts, dance through the principal street, fluttering small tri-coloured flags, and making antics after the true *pas de l'ours* fashion. A kind of mock combat with small sticks, to a dull dancing-dog measure, varies the heavy routine of the inexpressive ballade, and some boys, fantastically dressed, march to the head of the troop as guardians of the prizes, which, notwithstanding the efforts made to give a dramatic effect to the business, cut a very homely figure.

We have soldiers, too: what in France can be done without them? Half a dozen gens d'armes, reinforced by as many more rustics of the *garde urbaine*, begin to show themselves; nothing, however, can be more tranquilly disposed than the people, and here I must say (though I believe that I have said it elsewhere before) that the French have a great advantage over us. Our cakes-and-ale people are often quarrelsome and turbulent when they are numerous; but the French make merely cheerful meetings of their popular festivities, and never disgrace them by disorder. No intoxicated brawler interrupts the general harmony,

or coarse expression shocks the delicate ear; no private rancour breaks out in the hour of indulgence, or feeling of casual excitement produces the result of deliberate vengeance. It is now night: the games are over, the prizes adjudged, the dancers tired out, the fire-works extinguished, and not a sound of turbulence has been heard during this long day of recreation; nor, after sports which called for prodigious physical exertion, have the actors in them found it necessary to go through the restorative process of drinking. This capability of temperate enjoyment I have already noticed as a delightful feature in the French character—the slight boil-over among the Jacobs and Labans of yesterday goes for nothing; the general rule, to which it makes a rare exception, still holds good: besides that affair of the patriarchs, was one of family pique, a feeling which lords it over national and individual character more than almost any other with which I am acquainted.

But of this impress of decency on the popular recreations which I find so charming in France, all (or nearly all) the migrating British can judge. Who has not been at St. Cloud?—the most popular of the many fêtes that take place annually

in the neighbourhood of Paris; and who has been there without remarking that in a meeting, which may be strictly called a popular one, and where a large proportion of the inhabitants of the faubourgs St. Marceau and St. Antoine may be found recreating, not a coarse word is heard, or a violent gesture witnessed? Even the most delicate female may mingle in the crowd without the risk of encountering any thing offensive, and this decorum not proceeding from a dulled spirit, but from a habit of decency. In countries where promiscuous meetings, commencing in mirth, degenerate too frequently into scenes of riot and confusion, the susceptibility of enjoyment is in general far less lively than among this quick and sensitive people.

The *boudin*, *andouillette*, *fromage de cochon*, and other *charcuterie*, thrown out from the booths of the Champs Elysées on a royal anniversary, and the sour wine that washes it down, might have made our balladins less or more vivacious, but not, I think, vociferous or quarrelsome. In the Pyrenees the diversions of the people have often a grave, sometimes an elevated character. Plays are got up at Bagnères de Bigorre, in the villages about Pau, and in other places, performed entirely

by peasants and working men; and these plays are not mysteries, nor yet the Christmas carol, or the Epiphany put in action; but the Cid, or Mithridate, or Athalie. As in the days of Theseus, women are not permitted to act; but Flute, Snout, Quince, Bottom, Snug, and Starveling, are all ready to rasp off their beards and subdue their rough voices to the indignant pleadings of Chimene, or the endless lamentations of Andromache. A jobbing carpenter in a hamlet of Béarn, a family man, no longer in his "salad days," and with a most hard-working visage, Talma'd it in Britannicus not long ago, to the admiration of the multitude. Nice critics pronounced his acting excellent; and he himself found the sport so engaging, that had he not been both fisherman and carpenter,—so of course full handed,—he would have liked well enough (he told me) to have gone on with it.

August 27th. Three or four ungenial days have frightened away half the visitors of Cauteretz; but now August has come again, and so charmingly attired, with such a bright thanksgiving air, as if she felt herself all the better for the course of baths to which her sun-dried charms have been recently submitted. Yet, though sunshine enters

by every break in the mountains, and one half of the valleys are in a blaze that makes the shade on the other half deliciously refreshing, still there is something of autumn already abroad,—not visible in the leaves or in the grass, scarcely in the sky, but recognised by the feeling with which we look at nature; a feeling probably created by a change in the atmosphere inobvious to the eye, but which is instantaneously communicated to the mind through some secret channel of intelligence.

I am not quite sure that I express my meaning; but what I would say is, that there are days in the early autumn season, days with all the warmth and glow of summer in them, which, were I to awaken suddenly from a ten-years' sleep, I should know—and without looking at bud or flower, were autumn ones. There is something vague in the colouring of the air, too vague even to be pointed out to another, and something magical in the influence of this very vagueness on the mind too subtle to be steadied into words; but which, long before the veiled radiance, the yellowing leaf, and the diaphonous distance, have come even in their faint beginnings, brings all the poetry of the sweetest of seasons, all its beautiful and pensive

images, all its moral loveliness, to touch, and fill, and chasten the heart which seeks the spirit of its mystery.

28th. Passed our morning at Beaucens, the ruined château of the Rohan Rocheforts, which we had only seen from the terrace of Despourrins. Madame de Motteville saw it in 1660, as she travelled towards Bayonne to meet the court, who were sojourning there for the double purpose of ratifying the treaty of peace between France and Spain, and concluding the marriage between Louis XIV. and the good-natured Infanta, who was destined to learn lessons of patience, and practise them, on the throne of France. According to her account, it was then a dismal concern, and almost inaccessible; so that she fancied it must have been " l'habitation d'Urgande la déconnue." This clever and very entertaining court-favourite, calls the people of the Pyrenees *méchants;* and adds, " la rusticité du climat les rend cruels." The same sun still shines upon the beautiful Lavedan; but its influence on the moral character of the inhabitants seems more benignantly exercised. Leaving the inevitable Pierrefitte, as usual, behind us, and turning for a little way towards the gorge of Luz,

we crossed its romantic opening, and following the course of the river, arrived at a hamlet where the carriage-road ceases. My chair had followed me from Pierrefitte, (needlessly, as it proved, for we afterwards found out that we could have got one where we stopped,) and the rest of the family party had brought their nimble feet with them, and found good use for their services; for the narrow road being in many places converted into a stream and all but impassable, they had to jump from stone to stone, clamber up one side of the hedge and down at the other, or skim their way over the water like swallows—minus wings, which made some difference. But the meadow paths were delightful, and brought us, over a carpet of wild flowers and sweet-scented herbs, to the foot of the hill on which the ruin stands. In ascending we passed the hamlet of Beaucens, a kind of back forest solitude, still and umbrageous as an Indian village; bedded in shade, and watered by pure rills, but deplorably peopled: not a soul without a goître, and all dirty and wretched looking, though not ill-clothed; decently housed too, but apparently not benefited by means from which others would have extracted comfort. Remarked three

or four crétins; one a child, and a melancholy spectacle, sitting in a tranquil posture at a door, and roaring at measured intervals like a wild beast: the contrast between the repose of his body and the fierce cry mechanically uttered, and as if by something that had life within him but was not himself, was awfully unnatural. I have since thought that it was probably market-day at Argelez, and that the hale, the active, and the industrious had trotted there with their wares, leaving the sick, the inefficient, and the very poor, who have no means of traffic, to take care of themselves and each other.

Be this as it may, a troop followed us up to the top of the hill, clacking their patois harshly, and presenting a forbidding spectacle of uncleanness, apparently not necessitated by circumstances. Having been for some time accustomed to the comfortable and orderly appearance of the peasants about Cauteretz, their look of wretchedness struck us painfully; however, the chairmen said they were not poor (distressed), but only beggars. A nice distinction, which might be applied more extensively.

At last, having got what they could, they

departed; leaving us to the enjoyment of the charming scene before us. From our green platform on the summit of the hill, we looked upon the delightful region that lay at our feet, enclosed within the encircling curtain of mountains through whose rents the eye enters, saluting the distant peaks which seemed to close up their issues. It is a rich and lovely view, variously yet harmoniously coloured, and, like that divine one from St. Savin, with a fine Italian glow upon it. The little hill that lifts the ruins above the valley of Argelez, is entirely detached from the neighbouring mountain; and thus allows the eye to make a wide sweep, interrupted only by the tower and scattered fragments of the castle. A soft home-scene developes its gentle beauty through the broken arches,—always a flattering medium, but its sweetness needs no artificial colouring.

How delightful it is to look down from an eminence and enjoy the deep repose of nature, and the inward stillness which it communicates to the mind, surrounded by ruins that speak to the attentive fancy, and feed that meditative turn which tempers the feeling of admiration by blending with it a devotional and tender sentiment, and

fixing it to a resting-place. We sat "by the walls of Balclutha, and they were desolate;" the thistle grew there and the long grass, and the bramble made room for itself in the revel hall and in the lady's chamber. We knew nothing either of knight or lady; they were not familiar to us by story, nor endeared to us by the companionship of fancy: we knew that they were Rohan Rocheforts, and no more; but we felt the influence of the past, and sat down thoughtfully amidst its fragments. The air was sweet, the sky still, the silence breathless: it is difficult to describe the sense of disengagement from the world, the train of thought, the peace of heaven which possess the soul in such scenes and moments; if there be one spark of fire in the breast, how it mounts upwards, how it kindles into incense as it ascends.

As we came down the hill, the sun left us,—not to set, but to hide itself behind the soft grey clouds, of which the sky has been all day full. There was now little colouring in the landscape, and that little was dark and streamy, yet great effect was produced, and as if by unseen means; wonderful clearness and depth in the darkness, and

a transparency in the narrow sky-line that edged the horizon, like pale fluid silver.

Of the ruins there remains but little; a square tower covered with ivy, part of the bastioned wall, a gate-way, and some arched relics of the interior. The want of space must have been always against grandeur; yet I can fancy that the vow of the heron, or of the gory shirt, may have passed from lip to lip within the hall; or that in softer times the stately chatelaine may have overlooked from her elevated seat, quaintly wrought with divers colours, the maidens of her household, while their slender fingers raised flowers of gold and flowers of silver from the dark tissue, or hung red apples on green trees; or, with a loftier aim, designed the human figure, suspending Absalom to the oak, or lifting up the obedient arm of Abraham.

But whatever it may have been, matters not now. There is still enough left for interest; its site is beautiful, its colouring soft and gracious, its aspect from the valley romantic. There is always something profoundly expressive in the dismantling touch of time; all that it has withdrawn,

fancy replaces with activity, and even in the midst of the beggars and crétins of Beaucens, recalls the Rohan Rocheforts and the red-cross banners of the feodal times,—times of romance to us, whatever they may have been to those who lived in them.

In the village below, we again met the vine throwing about its 'marriageable arms' round the orchard trees. It is thus that it looks beautiful; the trimmed and cropped vine of the regular wine countries is rather a drawback on scenery. But there are sorer drawbacks here: as we came down the road, two poor idiot-looking boys stood by the way-side and grinned at us; their faces were aged and wrinkled, and their cheeks white and leathery. Such sights take painful hold of the mind, discolouring Nature's loveliness, and turning thought from the contemplation of her beauty.

It was not till after we had left Beaucens far behind us, that we learned that higher up in the hills is a holy shrine called the chapel of Bedouret, whose guardians are three women that, like Anna the prophetess, "depart not from the temple," serving the Virgin—to whom it is dedicated—with

fastings and prayers night and day. When one dies, another immediately presents herself, eager to devote her life to the same sacred office.

Not far from this mountain fane, are the ruins of the monastery of St. Orrens. Like St. Savin, he was noble, a Spaniard, and a hermit; but called by a miracle from his solitude, exchanged his staff for a crosier, and died archbishop of Auch.

CHAPTER III.

SCENE-SHIFTING—THE COMING HOME OF THE FLOCKS—SHEPHERDS AND THEIR DOGS—PEASANTS OF THE PYRENEES—LOVE OF HOME AND OF NATURE—GAIETY NOT ALWAYS HAPPINESS—ADIEU TO THE BATHS—LE BOUQUET D'ADIEU—MORNING—THE SONG OF THE SHEPHERD—SOUNDS AND IMAGES OF SORROW—THEIR EFFECTS ON DIFFERENT MINDS.

AUGUST 30th. Foul skies after fair promises. Yesterday was like a vernal day in Italy, and now it is as grey as autumn in a northern country, the wind nipping, and snow already on the near mountain tops. This sudden change seems to be the general signal of departure: all the post horses are in requisition, and "Je pars demain;" or "Juidi;" or "Vendredi;" infallibly follows the "Bon jour."

As cold is my mortal enemy, we too are going, in hopes of meeting the blessed sun again at Bagnères, where we shall be more out of the shadow of the mountains; and probably Cauteretz will, before long, have returned to its seven or eight

months' solitude; and its *Place*,—which for the last few weeks has been an arena for ambulating bears, monkeys, tumblers, rope-dancers, etc.—a show-board for balloons, ballades, the sentimental errors of Punch and the sorrows of Judy, be left to the poor Spaniards, who are flocking down from their mountains to take advantage of the cheap season, and bathe their lame hands and rickety feet, without the risk of offending the civets, or coming "between the wind and their nobility."

The coming home of the flocks, which is now daily taking place, does not present a scene of so much interest as I had looked for. It is a simple pastoral tranquilly got up—the opening burst excepted; but I had imagined the shepherds returning joyfully after their six months' sojourn in the desert, and pictured to myself their wives and children coming out to meet them with thankful hearts and happy faces. I expected family gatherings, the bagpipe, and the galoubet; the wheaten loaf and the wine-flagon, with many other things that seem now to my sobered fancy almost fantastical. But every thing is conducted with the solemnity of an interment; each flock is preceded or followed by an ass lightly freighted, probably

with the remnant of the meal, the blanket, and the soup-kettle; two or three superb goats, who have been the nursing mothers of the shepherd in his solitude, usually march at the head of each division; presenting themselves, like goats of quality, with the easy assurance of high breeding, and appearing sensible of the beauty of their long hair, which shines like floss silk. Then come the sheep, tottering under the weight of their fat and fleece; and close to them the *gros dogue*, a magnificent monster of the true Pyrenean breed, bold as a lion, and vigilant as a Spanish duenna. In the van marches a shepherd, another sometimes brings up the rear, comfortably clad in the vest, trousers, and berrêt of grave brown; the unity of colour has a serious but not unpleasing effect, and the berrêt, as an ancient thing, goes well with the shepherd's staff and wallet.

And thus they pass on with anxious and thoughtful visages, wholly occupied with the care of their flocks, (who know the voice of their shepherd and answer to it obediently,) looking neither to the right nor to the left, as men returning home from exile might be expected to do; but presenting the same inflexible sobriety of deportment, the

same undeviating course, until they arrive at the place of their destination. There is certainly nothing striking in their staidness, though there is something pleasing in its grave simplicity; and the serene philosophy with which the shepherd not only supports but enjoys his lonely life, has a moral in it at once dignified and touching.

The dogs of the Pyrenees are said not to live long when transported to another country; and sometimes, guided by that wonderful instinct which seems almost to supply the place of reason, and by its marvellous impulsion to produce effects surer even than those of memory, have been known to retrace their way back to the mountains by new and untraversed paths, and through all the impediments of rock and flood which an anarchical nature has thrown in their way.

Setting aside the mercenary feeling, which does not probably extend its influence beyond the atmosphere of the watering-places, the peasant of the Pyrenees seems made of excellent stuff: frank and cordial, less courteous, or perhaps fine-witted, in the country of Bigorre than in that of Béarn, though perhaps not less kindly, there is something of decency in his exterior, and of independence in

his mien, which conciliates esteem. Many here have served in the armies of Napoleon, whom they seem to look upon as a something between the god Mars and the 'petit caporal,' whose genus they do not exactly comprehend; but they perfectly remember that, in his time, valour made its way to honour and glory; that, like Pistol, every soldier might say,

> "The world's mine oyster,
> Which I with sword will open."

It was not alone "the bubble reputation" that was sought for in the cannon's mouth, but the gold and purple of the world also,—the summit of the pedestal. Like Mahomet, Napoleon made known to his followers, that "in the shade of the scimitars, paradise was prefigured,"—an immediate paradise, of which they took instant possession.

The seemingly (and, I believe, really) happy condition of the peasants here, who are usually small proprietors, and, as their dress denotes, sufficiently at ease to lay by for a certain degree of luxury, makes the seriousness of their habitual deportment, as contrasted with the lively image previously formed of French volatility, appear remarkable to strangers; who, drawing their idea

of national character from imperfect sources, believe a Frenchman to be a portion of organized quicksilver, and that those who are not gay must be dull. But the fact is, that Frenchmen—now every where thinkers—are influenced, like all other people, by the moral and physical atmosphere which surrounds them; and the shepherd or small farmer here, as in other mountain-valleys, condemned by his lonely calling, remote abode, and the long inclement winter, to which his bleak position subjects him, to frequent solitude or home seclusion, becomes grave from habit, not from intellectual deficiency. From the same cause, his attachment to the objects that interest him becomes stronger; those are few, and often confined to his flock, his hut, and his mountains. If they should be shared with dearer objects, they are still few. Affection is not scattered over a large space, or weakened by many divisions; it is concentrated, and therefore deep. Those who live in the world love so many things, and love them in such various ways, that it loses its body, and becomes expanded into thinness; but in a remote spot, the calls upon the heart are few and stationary, and the prodigious influence which habit has over our sympa-

thies would of itself account for the attachment which the inhabitants of unfrequented countries feel for their mountains and their valleys, even if the natural instinct and memory of love, which attaches us to the place of our birth and the scenes of our childhood, never existed.

As the peasants here cannot speak our language, nor we theirs, we can know but little of their minds and feelings; but such as have served, and acquired in their military capacity a smattering of French, seem not to have been dazzled by the world out of their love of home. One of my chairmen had been at Paris with the army: I asked him how he liked it, expecting raptures. He said calmly, "C'est un joli petit endroit,—pas mal."

Uneducated minds, accustomed to the great works of nature, are seldom astonished by the brick and mortar performances of man. I recollect an old shepherd of Patterdale, who had been at Chester, once saying to us, (speaking of the town,) "It is a poor mean place: God has had nothing to do with it." His ideas of magnificence were borrowed from more splendid sources than those within the command of architectural ingenuity; the deep, indrawn, devotional feeling with which the inhabi-

tants of a mountain country are usually imbued, and which finds its outlet in the speech of prayer, in the strong sentiment of admiration awakened by, not educated to its object, exists, I have no doubt, in the cabin of the Pyrenees, as it does in the châlet of the Swiss Alps.

But generally speaking, the French peasant was perhaps gayer in the old *dimes et droits* times, when he was less happy. The anxious feeling flies from itself; the joyous burst, the boisterous revel, is often an escape from pain, but happiness is a heart-derived and self-sufficing feeling, that sings on the perch more than on the wing. The gay are often like the blind, whose cheerfulness, elicited by society, and finding in it the means of exercising those faculties of which they are still in possession, seems something surprising to superficial observers, who have not followed them into the solitude of the dark chamber; while the really happy are, like the deaf, often seeming sombre among the social, because their sources of enjoyment are within their own familiar dwellings. Beyond these sacred enclosures the morally happy find little *real* reciprocity of feeling, the deaf still less of thought; the one returns thankfully to the

lovely quiet of the shared and intellectual home, the other to the contemplation of nature, or the society of books, whose written language speaks, not to the closed ear, but to the open eye.

The system of rural economy in the valleys of the high Pyrenees, differs little from that of the Alps. Ramond remarks this almost minutious similitude; and accounts for it by the observation, that man is every where the same, and that similar situations suggest similar means of action. In the low valleys the song of the nightingale fills the air with its power and sweetness, and all our pretty home warblers are heard in the woods and vineyards. In the mountains, the eagle, the bearded vulture, the 'grand duc,' the hawk, the heath-cock, the wood-hen, the linnet of the Alps, the blackbird of the rocks, and many other wild winged things find their home; so do innumerable plants and flowers, which the botanist discovers with delight; the insect tribes are beautiful, various, and harmless too, as far as I have seen. I have often felt musquitoes comfortably settled on my forehead at Pau, but never was stung by one of them.

31st. Up early, and off to the Rallière to take

my last glass of the waters, and thank the good woman (I can hardly call her nymph) of the fount, for the beautiful farewell-nosegay which she brought me yesterday,—dahlias like precious stones; there was the amethyst and the ruby, the deep glowing jacinthe and paler topaz; and mixing with them, some wild strawberry-blossoms, as if Spring had sent her little pearly messengers to say, "Don't forget me; I shall come again."

How delightful it is to be abroad with nature in the early morning! how beautiful is her gladness, how full of harmony and joy the greetings of the forest and the fields! Every little bird warbling its song of thankfulness from its own green bough, and the crackling bark, the stirring grass, the light rustle of the leaves, the tall grove saluting the sunbeams that just gild its top with their early glory; the 'rooky wood,' sending out one by one its cawing tenants, the dew-drops dressing out the grass in its gala robe of brightness, every drop making a little globe more beautifully mathematical in its form than the most cunningly rounded diamond; and buds, leaves, blossoms, all putting on their robes of gladness as if they were

thanking heaven for having given them a new day. The heart must indeed be full of care that shuts itself against the delicious contagion.

Notwithstanding the early hour, the arcade and terrace of the baths were more lively than usual. Two or three cloaked figures walked up and down at a brisk health-begging pace; others, considering repose as better than action after their mineral draught, sat glued upon benches at each side of the fount. One fair creature peeped out from her bath all flushed and steamy; another sketched the capa of a Spanish shepherd; a group of little girls filled up the steps, one singing loudly, and the rest tabering upon their breasts like the maids of Huzzab. I admired their good-humoured philosophy; every five minutes they were routed by a passing chair,—all one to them; back they came the next moment to the seat, and the song, and the tabering, as if they had never been disturbed. In towns, the children of the poor are drudges from their infancy, used to all the craft and shifts that necessity suggests, and speedily losing the happy thoughtlessness of childhood in the premature anxieties of their hard-working existence. In the country, poverty is less heavily felt, and solicitude

comes later. There is a fine heedless lapse, a happy daisy-picking prime, which the gentle labour of the distaff or the knitting-needle plyed at the cabin door, or amongst the birds and bushes, or in the home chimney-corner, scarcely interrupts. Children are like flowers, they need an atmosphere that suits them; the pot of marum in the cottage window has more country sweetness in its scant leaves, than the fine-drawn carnation that hangs its streaked head from the frame of crossed laths in the sky-light of a town garret.

Last night some young men of the village, who have lately taken to singing through the streets at serenading time, droned out the song of the shepherd under our windows,—and O how dismally! They talk now of the head voice, and the throat voice; but these chaunters disdained either, and dragged up their notes manfully from the pit of the stomach with the true cathedral tug. In the active days of the church, no transgressing nun, or apostate monk, was ever buried or burned alive to more melancholy music; no dying abbess ever anthemed out of the world more mournfully: yet it was meant in pleasantness, and the song is considered as meet music for a rustic festival. People

who live in the world, or for it, fly from the impression of sadness; while *the people* love the emotions awakened by sounds and images of sorrow. Popular music is usually plaintive; the song of the shepherd is a dirge, and while the fisherman casts his net he whistles some rude ditty, with the moaning of the wind and the cry of the sea-mew in it.

Perhaps it may be that fantastic sorrows, fostered till they become real ones, or real sorrows engendered by the agency of the passions or the workings of over-wrought sensibility, may so far absorb the mind of the artificial and fastidious man, that, in the representation of distress, nothing may meet his eye but the naked wretchedness with which his shrinking egotism shuns to be acquainted. Or it may be, that he sees in it things which come too home to the present, or seem to anticipate the future with a too near show of probability. Perhaps his real world abounds too much in shadow to make darkness welcome; and those images which carry him from himself, or from that which he dreads for himself, into the sunny land of cheerfulness and promise, are what he seeks. He thanks

those who make him laugh, because for the moment they make him forget; but the exhibition of sorrow is a return upon self, which offends and shocks.

But the natural man, whose passions are not sharpened by contact, but on the contrary, subdued by daily and laborious exertion, or thrown into vulgar and weakening channels, and whose sensibility—not sublimated by visionary or romantic indulgence—seldom exceeds the bounds of kind-heartedness, finds in the exaggeration of distress, in the spreading out of wretchedness, a powerful excitement, which to a nature unused to be excited is like the gift of a new sense. He traces no painful similitude between the fiction and his own existence, or its chances; his feelings are free, and altogether independent of fears or recollections; he looks on as a child safe in the arms of its mother does at a pantomime; the freaks of the masked harlequin, which were he within the reach of the wooden sword might create terror, seen at a distance, and in the midst of positive safety, excite only joy. The ballad, which to a stimulated or a worn-out imagination conveys the wail-

ings of ruined hopes and sorrowing memory, is to him the song of repose,—a pleasant contrast by its gentle tenderness to his rugged habits, or by its deep despair to his customary cheerfulness; and he listens to it with the same kind of egotistical pleasure, with which the howling of the tempest sometimes fills the mind of those who hear it from their soft beds and storm-proof shelter.

CHAPTER IV.

VALLEY OF AZUN—THE MISSION—NOTRE DAME DE POUEY LA UNT—PREACHING IN THE MOUNTAINS—CHRISTIAN BEDOUINS—COSTUMES—THE CHURCH-YARD— OLD AGE AND YOUTH—THE OULE OF AZUN—THE VILLAGE INN—CREAM AND COMPLIMENTS—PIETY IN THE MOUNTAINS —LAUGHTER AND FROWNS—RETURN THROUGH THE VALLEY AT EVENING—BEAUTY OVERLOOKED—THE PRIESTESS PEASANT—SUPPER AND ADVICE.

DIVERGING westward from the little town of Argelez is the valley of Azun. To see it thoroughly, we left Cauteretz in the early morning, and on arriving at Pierrefitte, ordered a chair and horses for the excursion, which followed us to Argelez; none of the former and few of the latter being kept there.

Going up the valley in a flaming sunshine as we did, is seeing it to the utmost disadvantage, at least in its open parts. When the finely toned and tinged mountains at its head are approached, then they make shadows for themselves, and the Pic d'Arrens shows the snow on its summit splendidly.

The first winding up from Argelez is delicious; a climbing road, that makes its way gently above grassy slopes and amidst prodigious chestnut-trees, and walnuts of almost equal beauty; but we were not altogether satisfied; things looked bleary, not rich and soft, and yet the valley belongs entirely to the mellow style of landscape. As we passed on, broiling, a group of tinkers pursued their vocation under the shadow of an arch: the man was soldering pans, the woman blowing the fire; he with a pale cruel eye, thin hair, ruddy colouring, and a bull's throat, denoting strength for all savage purposes; she a Medea, with horrible locks, grey and streaming. A desperate-looking pair, with imps to match them. What a sweet family party to stumble on in a lonesome lane by the light of the glow-worm! But the poor imps were to be pitied; for as there is not in the whole range of moral deformity any thing more revolting to humanity than the spectacle of childhood corrupted by parental example, so is there nothing that excites a deeper or more intense feeling of compassion.

There were some pleasant resting-places for the eye as we went along, and good leaps downwards

through the broad branches on the windings of the river, that made wild sweeps and wild music below amongst the meadows; but still the sun glared, and I felt that either I was not up to the scenery, or the scenery not up to my imaginings. But as we approached the head of the valley, the sun was lower in the horizon, and its whole beauty made itself known,—its gentle yet majestic beauty, deep, still, sequestered. We had chanced to light upon the opening of a mission: the word *mission* had its effect in the solitude of the mountains; it brought to mind the preaching in the desert, when the first Christian worshippers gathered together in the early days of their believing, to hear the doctrine of pure faith, and simple, entire, self-sacrificing piety. We met many persons returning from the *prêche* who had received comfort; chiefly hooded women in their solemn capuchons of white or black cloth covering them from head to foot, the eyes alone visible. One (an aged female) exalted to enthusiasm, talked of the missionary's eloquence as if there had been a foretaste of heaven in it; or that St. John had come again into the wilderness to preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

We went up to the chapel of Nôtre Dame Pouey la Unt, beautifully set down upon a platform, overlooking a shut-in world of sweet and serene aspect, and having for its rough pavement the rock on which it is built. A fissure runs through it, and when it rains, a stream through the fissure; but the walls are panelled brown and gold, the roof azure starred with gold, the pillars of the high altar twisted like those of the baldaquin of St. Peter's at Rome,—gorgeously gilt and gracefully wreathed with vine-leaves, and tendrils, and bunches of grapes all gold, or its likeness. Over the porch is inscribed

MOSTRA TE ESSE MATREM,

and the holy Mary, multiplied within in gilding and in silvering, is believed by the inhabitants of the valley, who do her humble homage, to show herself by many sweet acts of love and graciousness to be indeed their mother.

We were too late for the *prêche*, and too early; the morning service was over, and the evening one not to begin till towards nightfall. We regretted that we were not able to stay for it; a sermon delivered with earnestness, and in the calm of evening in the hollow of the mountains, promised

something primitive and holy, becoming the serious communication of the word of God to a congregation of simple and believing people. The early Christians, compelled to worship in remote places, chose such spots as this, hidden from all eyes but those which looked down upon them from heaven, and prayed in the shadow of the valley or the hollows of the rock, concealing the symbols of their faith lest they should be exposed to profanation; but if surprised, dying for it joyfully.

Notwithstanding the grave and edified deportment of the elders, male and female, there was no chance of an offensive display of fanaticism; for though the girls of the village had already undergone the discipline of two sermons, there were certainly no camp-meeting terrors visible: on the contrary, some played at hide-and-seek in the empty chapel of Our Lady, holding neither pulpit or confessional as too sacred for their gay purpose; nor did the peasant who acted the part of sacristan, though he wore a blue berrêt and talked of keeping sheep upon the mountains, appear in the least shocked at the indecorum,—indeed his eyes joined in it.

These girls, and their sacristan too, had picture

about them; but it was not in the gold and silver chapel on the consecrated mount, but down below in the church of Arrens, the last village of the valley, tha tthe real Rembrandts were—the devout antients, who, wrapped in their long capuchons of white or black, knelt on the pavement, some in the broad light, others in the vague shadow. Many sat on their legs Arab-fashion, with their shoes, which they had taken off on entering, placed before them—such desert groupes! Christian Bedouins, converts from the wilderness,—looking so at least, with nothing but the eyes visible, and those only gleamingly through the opening of the long mantle. I never saw better pencil-food, and thought-food too; there was a dervish-looking figure spread out in a dim nook on the pavement, with his slippers beside him; and not far off a woman, who had turned up the skirt of her black robe over her face, as if to bury herself in holy abstraction, that brought all that was said and done eighteen hundred years ago in far-off Palestine like a yesterday to the mind. In the churchyard (a grassy one with flat tomb-stones, like our village cemeteries,) were small parties scattered about; the men keeping close company, the women

making separate groupes, as is usually the case in rustic meetings; altogether a well-dressed, happy, handsome population, set off by the holiday gear, worn for the mission as well as for the dance; but the female venerables all in mourning, except the capulet, which was occasionally scarlet,—tall figures, with a prodigious length of black from the hip to the heel, and magician-like faces, bronzed, bearded, and unwoman-like, though often dignified. The girls were comely, joyous-looking souls, wearing the bright handkerchief tied at one side of the head, and sometimes the scarlet capulet thrown coquettishly over it with a pleasant air of pretension,—that was not the less pretension for its frank simplicity.

The effect of this Greek looking head-dress, not put on with a 'follow me shepherds' air, as at Bordeaux or Pau, but knotted negligently over the smooth tresses, is exceedingly pretty if the face be agreeable. We had a chamber-maid at the inn at Luz, who, with her dark hair drawn off in a smooth band from one side of her forehead and the low handkerchief on the other, was a perfect Maid of Athens; but then the countenance was as mild as it was handsome: a confident one thus arranged,

becomes audacious. The young men of Azun were not behind hand with the lassies in smartness, and looked upright and spirited in their dark vests and berrêts, relieved by the lively waistcoat or scarlet sash, and further brightened up by the showy neckcloth, as usual carelessly knotted below the open shirt-collar.

Old age does not always understand youth, or even childhood; it forgets its language,—and more, its emotions. A little girl of five years old, who was sitting on the grass near to a grave-stone, had got possession of a cracked saucer, which she was making powder of with the sole of her shoe. Unluckily, she caught the eye of one of the black capulets, who sprang forward, and twisting her round, spun her off a considerable distance from her harmless occupation, without trying reason, (of which children have such a quick perception,) or yet gentle reproof; or remembering that it was to the active principle in want of occupation that the sin of crockery pounding was attributable, and not to any individual spirit of mischief. It is true that children do seem sometimes to have the passion of destruction, and an enjoyment in it, as if the fracas delighted their ear, or the power implied

by its exercise their vanity; but their grandams are not always aware how much more effectual a wise and gentle word would be, than a spin round into a bed of nettles. The old woman was, however, delighted with her exploit, and while the child continued crying, set about gathering certain weeds, which, by the care she took in their selection, were evidently intended for medical purposes. I observed that she only plucked such as grew upon or close to the graves, as if their power consisted in their contact with the dead. "Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharoah is sold for balsams."

The valleys of the Pyrenees usually terminate in amphitheatres, called by the peasant *oules*. The Oule of Azun, darkening as the sun sank behind it, grew into such beauty, that we turned from it with regret; there was something so serene, so elevated, so religious in the character of the landscape, that the mind seemed bettered by its contemplation. We had roamed about until we were weary, and as evening drew on, began to think that a draught of milk would be a very agreeable refreshment; there was only one place in which it could be procured, and that was the pub-

lic-house of the village, which was already crowded with persons of both sexes: however, we went in, and were served with most delicious cream in a neat kitchen, where a family party, Flemish as Meiris's pencil could have made them, were at dinner. The table-cloth was white, the ragout savoury, the company intent and solemn. I complimented the matron, who headed the table, on the magnificence of her neck-handkerchief, all silk—purple silk, with a border of yellow roses outlined with gold colour. She seemed to seize the pith of my discourse; but having no French, left the answer to her husband, a travelled man evidently, and of extreme courteousness, who wore large metal buttons on his coat, and a town beaver; and who in return complimented me on my family, and even hinted at my look of youth, which I thought a great stretch of politeness. I do not think I ever enjoyed a fine feast so much as I did our bowl of cream in the valley of Azun. The milk in the Pyrenees is delicious: the shepherds preserve it in wooden vessels, placed in reservoirs, simply constructed by means of a few stones, in a running stream; stone slabs are laid on the tops

of those vessels, and thus the milk is protected from the influence of the summer heat.

As we left Arrens, the peasants were pouring in for the evening service, and a colouring of seriousness was gently but obviously supplanting the gaiety of the morning. The evening prayer in the mountain valley, where piety is still a sincere and undivided feeling, where conviction supplies the place of eloquence, and awakens in others what it feels itself, is perhaps more persuasive in its primitive and gospel simplicity than when offered up amidst the pomp and gorgeousness of the 'house of gold,' or 'the palace of ivory.' Such was the worship of the early Christians, to whom sufferings and death were their purple and their crown: they had no gilded domes or carved altars, but, like their divine Master, went up into the mountain to pray; or descended into the caverns which nature offered to them, and which the presence of God made holy. Priests and people on the best gossiping terms: two reverends from another valley arrived just as we departed, each on his sleek mule, and each, like old John Wesley, with his small portmanteau behind him; nodding

at one side, good day-ing at the other, while some who had come earlier for the opening of the mission, mixed cordially with the old folks of the village.

I said nothing of the valley as we went up, because the sun had produced that equality of glare which effaces every thing. We had stopped at a village called Aucun, and going into the church, were followed by a crowd of children, who it was evident from the wonder expressed in their faces, conceived my sheet of green paper, which I had pinned at full stretch across my bonnet, to be part of myself. But they were as good-natured as the market-folks of Nay had been on a similar occasion, and altogether very orderly and civil little souls, who smothered their inclination to laugh till I had set them the example;—then, to be sure, they did give way! but grew grave immediately when I took it off, and they saw that I was only a woman in a bonnet, and that my green verandah did not sprout out of my forehead like the laurels of a tent-stitch Daphne. An old ferocious-looking sorceress, six feet high and black as Andromache, was disposed to be violent—furious indeed—at my being carried in a chair;

but I made my porters explain to her that I was not strong enough to ride so far, and so could not see her beautiful valley in any other way. She was immediately mollified, and growing downright merry, gave me her hand with a sort of Caliban tenderness, adding a 'good-by' in patois, full of homespun cordiality.

But to return to my valley. If it a little disappointed us on going up with the sun in our eyes, and its white blaze on the landscape, we were richly indemnified on our return; for never did summer evening sky warm a sweeter scene. We had left the mountain-hollow in the wilderness of Judea behind us, with the darkness gathering on it, and the preacher crying aloud; all was stillness near,—the new-born freshness of the slopes just mown, and covered with sheep, the park-like pastures above gracefully planted, and the universal colouring of amenity spread over earth and sky, were beyond expression lovely. There may be bits in their valley which do not perhaps quite sustain its general character of Eden-like beauty; but there are also scenes of pastoral sweetness, of mountain depth and peacefulness, that it would be difficult to overpraise.

One charming spot towards the middle of the valley, where the deep glen of the Bat de Bun (nothing in the morning, but ineffable in the yellow light) runs back into the hills, retarded us long. Let those who love nature stop here,—but it must be at the evening hour,—and look below on the windings of the Gave formed by the two streams that, descending—one from the green glen of Bun, the other from the Pic d'Azun—unite their waters at the foot of a bold and beautiful projection, that seems to fill up the centre of the valley. Looking back, (we saw it as we returned,) were the high mountains, then jasper-dark; below, the bright stream; above, the broad pastures—again park-like and exquisitely wooded with oak and other wide-spreading trees, which found their fellows in the hills where we stood looking at them, till the scene grew into our hearts, and made us almost wish to live in it. But the grange on its fairy platform, or the hamlet on its emerald ledge, has entire possession; the peasant enjoys it all; no dwelling that denotes inhabitants who are so from choice is visible, no châteaux except ruined ones; yet the road is good, and the country fruitful: "Un pays *complaisant*," as an old peasant who joined our

party said,—adding, "but Providence has not blessed it with mineral springs; so it is passed by."

This *passing by* often surprises me here: spots that might well excite the wish to live and die in them,—easily accessible ones too,—are left to those whose country calling binds them of necessity to their native valleys; but few or none dwell here for the sake of nature and her delightful works; none care to follow her into her mountains or her glens; none build cottages, or castles, or dwelling-places of any kind, in those fair spots which her loving eyes have rested on and blessed. I saw none such in the valley of Azun, I saw none in the sunny valley of Argelez,—the dismantled château of Despourrins, and the convent-house of St. Savin alone excepted;* none in the graceful basin of Luz, so beautifully approachable and inviting. The côteaux round Pau are thickly dotted; but once in the mountains,—though they are grottoes for coolness in summer, and their open vales warm and sheltered in winter, the liveable, enjoyable habitation seems altogether forgotten. Except in the small towns that hang about, there

* If there are others, they do not present themselves to the passing eye.

are few habitations visible that rise above the scale of the farm-house.

The valley of Azun is chiefly grass or pasture, but a little of every thing is cultivated; not a grange without its broad tree, or broader clump, scarcely one without its rapid brook. A tall female figure stood on the brink of one as we passed, her long dark mantle closed round, but not lifted, so that the folds were broad and free, falling in straight lines to the feet, like the robes of a Greek statue; her feet bare and visible, her face concealed, her stillness awful. But as we approached, the noise of our cavalry startled her, and turning half round, the gold cross upon her bosom caught the last sunbeam, and the heathen priestess became a Christian woman,—a peasant of the valley in her capuchon. O the magic of the evening lights! The ruins of the castle of Arras, no better than an old wall as we passed up, had darkened into a grey picture; and Arsizau, half bathed in light and half in shadow, made another, but more gloriously coloured. The valley of Argelez, beautiful in mezzotint as we descended, and the tower of Vidacoz, which seems to keep its key, whitening in the twilight.

Slept at Argelez — Hôtel du Commerce; an anti-pastoral name, but the landscape from our windows, and the lazy toil-up of the hay-carts dragged on laggingly by dozing oxen, and the farmer's boy whistling by the side of his cows as they wind along the road snuffing into the hedges, are as sweet an evening hymn as ever was chaunted by nun or poet. Supped on all sorts of birds; muriers as fat as ortolans, chevreuil, and a mutton *grille* that some of the party found delectable.

To see the valley of Azun, dine at Argelez, or even (quicker work) on a green lap in the valley, and return to Cauteretz before nightfall, is a long day's work: it may be trotted certainly, but not, I think, dwelt on. Best to halt for a day at our Hôtel du Commerce, either in going to or returning from the baths; in which ever direction the traveller's way lies in coming from the plains, whether towards Barèges, Cauteretz, or St. Sauveur, Argelez must be passed, and a day can scarcely be more sweetly spent, even in these prolific mountains.

CHAPTER V.

DEPARTURE FROM CAUTERETZ—THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER—RECOLLECTIONS AND TENDER ONES—LOURDES TO BAGNERES DE BIGORRE—MORE OVERLOOKING—BAGNERES DE BIGORRE—ITS ORIGIN, ASPECT, AND GENERAL EFFECT—ITS ATTRACTIONS—SHOWS AND SOUNDS—ARCADIAN HILLS—A CAMPAGNE—LA GIULIETTA—ROSSINI—THE TOP AND BOTTOM OF THE LADDER—THE STAGE.

SEPTEMBER 1st. Came down from the mountains, leaving quiet little Cauteretz with regret. How silent are the fields on this great day of the partridge tragedy! I have not heard a single shot amidst the stubbles, or an echo from the hills. Happy birds! who have the good luck to live in the neighbourhood of such inactive sportsmen. Yet no where are field-sports more talked about than at Cauteretz, the display of shooting-jackets and fowling-pieces is prodigious; but Jean and Gabriel, the great hunters of the bear and izard, seem to have taken out an exclusive patent for killing.

Yet though the sound is absent, and the sight too, still I cannot express how strongly the stubbles and the autumnal colouring of the air bring back to my mind the first of September of former times; the well-known call under the window at day-break, the gravel thrown up against it, the excited sportsman hurrying on his capacious jacket, the impatient dogs whining to be gone, the cold pie plunged into hastily, the bubbling coffee swallowed scalding hot, and the accompanying rusks crammed into the pocket. And then the stride through the turnip-fields or the wet grass—every blade a water-spout, and the return through the stubbles; the discharge of the fowling-piece as home is approached, and its echo in the woods; and the good luck or the ill-luck,—the emptying of the bag: if scantily filled, the dogs or the country sure to be in fault; if amply, part sent to the cook and part to the neighbour: and then the hot soup, the tender cutlet, the brisk fire,—perhaps the nap, on that evening decidedly allowable.

Dear days, but now long gone-by ones! yet present to my memory as if they were all yesterdays; present even to the colour of the air, and the sound of the returning footstep. But every

season, both of life and nature, has its own delights; and if the flowers of spring are bright, the fruits of autumn are not less delicious.

No post horses at Lourdes, so obliged to sleep there. Saturday evening, and vigorous sweeping before the doors, but the women slatternly. In France it is usually the reverse,—neat women, and dirty streets. After Lourdes, less interest; the mountain Prospero seems to have broken his wand, we are no longer in a land of enchantment; yet, while I say so, the common-place brightens into the agreeable, and we pass along a cultivated valley between two lines of hills hung about with oaks and chestnut groves, with a pleasant mixture of meadow and arable, and a rich reddish-brown soil giving tone to the whole. Descriptive painters rarely mention the colour of the soil, yet it helps or mars the effect of scenery prodigiously.

As we began to mount up a very steep ascent two leagues from Lourdes, our old cronies, the mountains, looked in upon us through a break in the hills—beautiful hills, asking for accordant habitations, which no one thinks of here, though the lawn is already sloped and the tree planted. But only, as I have already observed, for the shep-

herds and their flocks, who being now come down from the summer pastures, spread their whiteness over the fields, and mixing with the cows that are allowed to roam at large within view of the herdsman, adorn the landscape with that look of pastoral life, which becomes the soft crayoning of nature in her moods of gentleness. I do not mean to say that, as far as the feeling of picturesque beauty, of retirement sought and loved for its loneliness, of thought-inspiring silence is concerned, the *campagnes* are not, in most instances, better away; but not in all. For if there are scenes which, from their very remoteness, their character of wild and even savage solitude, their utter silence, and the divine spirit of melancholy which fills the very air with its holiness, it would be sacrilege to break in upon by the material forms of life; there are also others in which the rural habitation associates itself with the idea of beauty, fruitfulness, and peace—felt and enjoyed; of man in alliance with nature, giving and receiving; of man living as nature meant him to do, in the midst of her bounties. But whether we lean to the worship of the altar or the hearth, whether the temple raised by God's own hand in the wilderness, or the sunny

social home be our delight, still my wonder is that such spots should not induce the wish to live in them, or doing so, that the wish should not sometimes bring about the execution.

We arrived early at Bagnères de Bigorre, and dropped at once into an apartment already taken for us. Our windows look out upon a broad mall, (*le Coustous*,) shaded by lime trees, and bordered at each side by a row of very good-looking houses. This is the grand promenade of the town, the field of general display; on week days, it is lined with booths, which all disappear on Sunday to make way for those who prefer 'the human face divine,' to green lanes and singing birds. The *beau monde* have the first right of path,—or take it; and to-day have exercised their small-arms till the early dinner, or the lunch, or some other calling off, scattered their ranks and left the coast clear for the nurse-maids, who have their light artillery too, and know how to use it. In summer, the evening hour is of course the favourite and fashionable one, for the musquito shore (as I have heard from one who had the misfortune to be intimately acquainted with it) is scarcely so hot as Bagnères in the months of July and August.

September.—Without being either imposing or romantic, there is something charmingly fresh and placid in the position of Bagnères. This town has its page in the history of Bigorre. Its origin is doubtful: some would make it anterior, by six or seven hundred years, to the foundation of Rome; others cling to the Phocians, who, having colonized Marseilles, may have stepped over the hills and established themselves here; while others, again, are content to date it from the conquest of Aquitaine by the armies of Cæsar. It suffered severely in the wars of religion; and was stormed by Henri de Transtamarre on his entrance into Aquitaine, after his defeat at the famous battle of Najarra.* The Romans knew and used its springs, as some inscriptions still extant testify; it was praised by Du Bartas, and preferred for its baths above all other places of the same kind by Montaigne; since then Bagnères has lost nothing of its popularity. It reposes on a plain fertilized by many streams, handmaids to the Adour, which traverses it rapidly; and close behind rises a line of modest hills gracefully wooded, and gently de-

* "Bataille moult dure, grande, felonneuse, et horrible," Froissart says.

tached from a mountain ridge covered with tufted vegetation. It is a legitimate watering-place, presenting itself cheerfully, with several establishments for baths, and one that is quite magnificent; some narrow streets, and some wider ones, varied with open spaces; and often pretty, and even really handsome houses mixed up with gardens, trees, and snatches of green fields that give a pleasant country look to the town. Every lane has its Naid, almost every house its particular urn; distilling freshness, and greatly facilitating general cleanliness.

The bill of fare here has all the usual watering-place items: balls, plays five times a-week, a Frescati, occasional concerts, baths, gaming-tables (the old plague-spot,) a troop of spurious Franconis, and a menagerie conducted by a Pole, a distinguished *élève* of the illustrious Martin; who, like his great master, governs his monsters by his eye, subdues his tiger to timidity by a look, or by another provokes its fury; and while it chafes and fumes, jumps on its back, tears open its jaws, and exhibits its two rows of deadly teeth to the company. This poor man is vain of the love of his hyena!—perhaps it is the only thing that loves him; and to the

strong necessity of the heart, even this rude affection may be grateful.

The rolling of wheels being the ordinary street-thunder, one is surprised to find Bagnères—where at this late season it is but seldom heard; so noisy as it contrives to be. It is a harp, a horn, a bass viol, or all together; or the trumpets of the false Franconis riding about with their painted children, (always a melancholy sight); or the double drums of the menagerie, the cries of the hawkers, the screams of Polichinelle, the shouts and laughter of the delighted rabble, and the bells—the dismal bells, that sound at this moment as if they were tolling out souls, while perhaps only tolling in sinners, or idlers, to the afternoon prayers.

In my native town there was a church in a distant suburb, far from the spot which was my home, whose bells had a remarkable toll; and often have I sat at evening listening to its sound with wet eyes, when I was too young to know what the feeling was which caused the unusual moisture. I well remember the solemn boom—with the graves that are down in the earth and the spirits of heaven in it,—the deep single toll; and then the dead silence, and presently the toll again: and when

I hear, as I do now, a sound that recalls it, the same midnight feeling passes over my mind; and if I do not still shed tears, it is because I have outlived the age when tears are an indulgence.

Sweet walking in the hills here, and paths leading through the meadows from one farm-house to another, that might tempt the laziest footsteps to follow their green windings. The immediate neighbourhood of the town is very pleasing, full of woody nooks, silent as a summer's noon, except when the lazy trickle of some little rill breaks on the ear with its sweet but weak monotony. The road to les Bains de Salut is a favourite walk; there are hills that go along with it, and cottages scattered over their surface, peaceful and rustic as the happy dwelling of Baucis and Philemon. Our various denominations of hall, mansion, manor-house, lodge, box, &c., which perfectly define to an English ear the thing meant to be expressed, are not translateable into French, either by word or sign: the *ferme ornée*, though borrowed from its language, is rarely heard of; every thing of three stories high, if it has but a turret and an iron gate, (and often without either,) is a *château*, and every thing between that and a farm-house a *campagne*.

We strolled up to one this morning as we returned from the Salut, hearing that strangers were permitted to look round from the terrace. The dogs barked furiously as we made our entry; and so would the maids have done too, if they could: three of them dashed out on us like muzzled mastiffs; but as they said nothing, we ventured to sit down on a wall and look about us. The house (a few rooms tacked on to a barn) had not a flower or a bit of green about it; the garden was mere stubble. I could not help thinking of England; a hill and dale country is easily made beautiful, the difficulty is to spoil it. A little care, a little fresh grass, and some healthy flowers, and this spot would be charming, for it has trees and quiet, an agreeable quarter-deck walk, and the Arcadian hills in front; but it is not wild enough to be left altogether in wildness. One thing is good,—there is no attempt at decoration; the meagreness of neglect is bad, but the exuberance of ill-judged ornament is still more detrimental.

A joyous group sauntered along the road as we returned; one of the party laughed as if she was born to do nothing else, and all the time with such a melancholy look in her eyes: I was struck with

the contrast, which had something sad and unsettled in it. The gayest creature I ever saw once said to me, "Ah! if you knew but all!"

An unfortunate vocalist, "premier contr'alto du Théâtre de la Scala à Milan," (as the programme sets forth,) débuted here yesterday evening. Her husband came to borrow our hired piano for the occasion, and assured E—— that his wife had not only the finest voice in the world, but also "la plus belle méthode;" she had performed Giulietta thirty-seven times at Milan to enraptured audiences, and Tancredi at Paris; but of her success in that fastidious capital he made less positive mention. The report was, however, on the whole so favourable, that even I, who consider myself as fairly invalided, (at least for the time being,) and have long refused to my inclination the fine old-fashioned amusement of a play, was tempted by such alluring promises to trespass on my early hours; forgetting that a husband may not always be the fairest judge in such cases, and very naturally puffs his wife's talents in the hope of lining his doublet with something better than play-bills.*

La Giulietta was only to sing between the acts;

* Vide *Gil Blas*.

so we had to go through a vaudeville before she produced herself. At length she came—the Capulet of Milan, not of Verona; there was no mistaking it. Stone-blue muslin dress, edged with yellow; tinsel diadem; "taille forte comme les statues Grecques,"—altogether the counterpart of the *Lovely Betsy* of Philadelphia, or (gilt wig excepted) the *Providence* of Helvoetsluys, who sit at the head of their merchantmen, defying the elements. She, too, dashed off courageously, nothing intimidated by the presence of Rossini, who sat in the front of the stage-box, and assisted, with profound attention and inconceivable *sang froid*, at the martyrdom of some of his most beautiful creations. I think he applauded—at least he listened.

After an hour's random vocalizing, we settled into a regular opera, which the company contrived to bring to a close without possessing a single note amongst them: for the contr'alto had retired, probably to reap the laurel harvest of the green-room. The acting was indifferent; nothing of the rising genius and fine exuberance of the barn about it, and little of the learned observances of the theatre,—altogether a failure, not bad enough to be laughable, and too bad to give pleasure. We

had expected something better from an eccentric-looking man, that we had often met with in our rambles, and who seemed to have a twinkling of the spirit of comedy in his eye; but he was flatter than a dissected joke.

When an individual adopts a career, it is usually from necessity, the influence of advice, parental authority, or the obvious chance of success; but the stage seduces its votaries by the mere force of its intrinsic allurements, and is perhaps the only one which retains them by the same spell in defiance of natural defects, public disapprobation, and all the variety of wretchedness resulting from perpetual failure. The head and tail of a profession —be it what it may—always make strange contrasts; as the lord chancellor and the hedge attorney, the court physician and the village apothecary, the archbishop and the curate schoolmaster, the hero or fine gentleman of the stage and the man who plays mute in the back ground, or runs in between the acts to pick up the dagger or hurry off the chairs.

A great actor must be a rare combination of genius, judgment, taste, force, feeling, memory, and physical advantages; in such a one nature

finds a faithful representative, and the passions a fitting utterance; and he who appears only to be admired, who feeds on the breath of fame with all the solid appliances to boot, which fame will not always give, can hardly be expected to reduce his diet to the vulgar aliment of ordinary natures. But for the tail of the profession—for our poor man of the fields, for instance, who looked round as if he felt their beauty and delighted in their sweetness,—what a trade! to starve (as he probably does) upon hisses.

And yet the stage, even in its least attractive form, excites emulation beyond all other shapes of fame, unless it be the embroidered one of war. High minds and fine ones have been seduced by it; and many an idle 'prentice, happy in the friendship of the candle-snuffer, sees the sure prospect of till and counter fade before the glory of playing the tyrant in a gilt-paper crown and a robe of scarlet flannel.

CHAPTER VI.

BAGNERES DE BIGORRE, CONTINUED—CHASSE AUX PALOMBES—AN AERIAL DWELLING—LES PALOMBIERES—AN ESCAPE—LANDSCAPE PAINTERS—LOOKING ONE THING, SEEING ANOTHER—THE ARTIST AND NO ARTIST—THE BEGGAR-MAN.

THE usual pic-nic, the usual ride, the usual calèche excursion, has each its turn here, as in other watering-places; but the amusement most in vogue is "la chasse aux palombes," * which begins early in September, and is continued till the middle or end of November. There is not much excitement in the sport, if sport it may be called; but the spot is lovely, and every visitor at Bagnères rides up to enjoy the charming view, and take the chance of seeing some poor pigeons netted. The manner of alluring these shy birds is ingenious; a man hung up in the air in a basket fixed on the top of a long straight pole, sustained by two others placed against it in an oblique direc-

* Wild pigeons.

tion, watches the approach of his intended victims, and salutes them as they pass with a volley of small sticks, or rather bits of wood, which so frighten the poor things, that they immediately lower their flight, and drive down against the nets, (les pantières,) previously suspended from tree to tree, to arrest their progress. Sometimes the birds fly high, as if with an instinct of danger, and so elude the enemy's vigilance; but oftener give into the snare, and sweeping downwards, find the nets suddenly dropped upon them by the pulling of a cord, one end of which is held by a man concealed in the adjoining brush-wood, who regulates his operations with the nice tact derived from constant practice.

The scene of action is a common fed by sheep, whose tinkling bells, prowling dogs, and childish shepherds, lying on the grass in their lazaroni nightcaps of chocolate-coloured worsted, thrumming the jews-harp and gabbling their patois, are fitting live-stock for the rural fore-ground. From certain points on this common are views of great beauty; at one side a vast horizon, at the other deep vales and lofty mountains, confining the eye within their romantic boundaries; and beneath,

images of pastoral life in its peaceful security, cheerful labour, or poetic loneliness. I could not help wishing for a shed amongst the nets, to which I might run up now and then to pasture my fancy on the sweet food which nature has spread out so bountifully; instead of it, we have a magnificent beech, under whose shade we are now sitting on the watch for the pigeons, and yet pleased that they do not—like Mrs. Bond's dilly dillys—'come to be killed,' or caught, which amounts to the same thing; and wondering how the man in the basket can keep his head steady, up in the sky as he is. Three poles, or rather masts, firmly fixed in the earth in a triangular position and bound together at top, support the basket: by one of these its occupant, with the help of a studding of wooden pegs, ascends to his domicile, which appeared to me to sway backwards and forwards with every breath of air, and certainly looked as if the first—not gust, but zephyr, would fly away with it, though they tell us it is as firm as a castle.

After wondering how the man gets in, one wonders how he can keep himself from falling out; but there he sits, from early morning until dusk, keeping watch, sometimes without the slightest glimpse

of a bird, and always, I should think, with a full view of danger; but he, I suppose, thinks otherwise. For myself, were an alternative offered me and a choice imperative, I should prefer the Eddystone light-house to this perch in the air with the ground a hundred-feet below; for there one has some sort of a *terra firma*, though one may be stormed off, or starved on it; but to hang in the air, like a dead leaf at the mercy of every random blast, is a position to which no effort of reason could reconcile me. But these men make nothing of it, and sit in the clouds as the tragic muse does in her chair of state,* quite comfortably.

In the midst of this delightful solitude, for we had no companions but the man who watched his nets in the back-ground, and the shepherd-boys who lay upon the turf as if they were growing into it, we opened our basket; and establishing ourselves under the shade of the broad beech, ate our cold chicken and grapes with appetites which would almost have relished the black bread and onions of the Spanish shepherd. After our pleasant meal, we dawdled about from one point of

* Sir Joshua Reynolds' portrait of Mrs. Siddons as Melpomene.

view to another, guessing whereabouts Rousillion was, where Bayonne,—fancying we could almost see Toulouse, and wishing that our wishes were Durindana, and could open a second breach in the mountains just wide enough to lean over and look into Spain, as one might through a window.

As we descended towards the village of Gerd, a lady passed us on horseback, and a moment after was thrown with violence; but she recovered herself and rose up slowly, before we had time to give her any assistance. Poor soul! she looked very pale and frightened, but did not appear to have received any material injury, and had courage enough to remount her horse and rejoin her companions, after a very short interval. Her escape was almost miraculous; had there been the smallest fragment of rock, or even a loose stone on the spot, and few places here are without both, she must have been miserably mutilated, perhaps killed. This accident made me reflect gratefully on my own escape, under similar circumstances, on the summit of the Righi. How true it is that in the midst of life we are in death, and how many homilies there are in that single thought!

Returning home, we met an uncravated artist,

with an umbrella under one arm, and a lank portfolio under the other,—the first I have seen here. In Switzerland every tree, every rock,—in Italy every broken arch, almost every gap in the old walls, has a straw hat planted before it; and often a marvellous lack of feeling and fancy underneath its capacious brim. I have frequently been surprised, on looking over the shoulder at the open sketch in its early stage, or the blue and green landscape in its later one, to find so little breadth or boldness, often so little truth, and still oftener so little poetic feeling. One would suppose that the choice of this branch of the art was in itself a proof of the love of nature, and of the existence of that feeling which strengthens into ultimate ripeness in its contemplation. Our day has produced great landscape-painters,—we have them still on the eminence; but the crowds who look at nature without seeing it, are beyond counting. And yet the solitude which feeds the dreaming fancy, the sibyl's voice that issues from the hollow of the cave, or the depth of the forest,—the free, the grand, the silent, the beautiful nature,—thousand tongued in its stillness, in whose presence their solitary calling finds its exercise, could not, one

should think, fail to call forth, if not create, that sentiment of reverence, that deep feeling of its infinite and ineffable beauty, which might at least prevent those who worship at the shrine from defacing the image.

A vague and tender melancholy, an imagination tinged with the spirit of romance, but pure and elevated; a love of simplicity, a mind that idealizes its objects,—wild beliefs, inexplicable fancies,—reveries indefinite, profound, intense; a religion of emotion, that beholds the eye in the heavens, and hears the voice in the winds; that opens the book of nature and meditates its divine page, seeing that the hand of God is on it; and when it thinks of heaven, looks upwards, beholds the daily miracle of light, and asks no farther. Such, it would seem, should be the tokens of a man who lives in daily and lone companionship with nature: but no, he only thinks of her as a lay figure, dresses her up in patches of green and patches of blue, pieces her summer robe with bleak, unfitting bits, brightens her grand and sombre winter one with yellow ochre, inundates her stern rocks with sunshine, her feathery palm, pale aloe, and heaven-seeking pine, with gloom; hardens his southern landscape by

unmitigated outlines, and dilutes the grandeur of her northern imagery by the inappropriate atmosphere of the diluting south.

An artist sat painting by the way-side, as we walked one fine spring day along the path that leads behind the hills from the fountain of the Acqua Cetosa onwards to the Ponte Mole at Rome. He bowed urbanely; so we stopped and entered into conversation: his face was spare and earnest, and his voice had a sort of shy enthusiasm in its tone, which I have often remarked in young Germans. When he spoke of the broad and brown Campagna that lay outspread before us, untilled, unplanted,—pastured by large herds of cattle, and divided by the full flood of the undecorated Tiber, he seemed to feel it in its poetry, its antique character, and religious stillness. It was the image, he said, of a primitive world, and his mind seemed filled with the impression of its simple grandeur; yet his drawing was like a school-girl's map. Here the want seemed not to be of feeling, but of mechanical power; it is true, that would-be artists often talk by rote, as musical tyros do who utter raptures while their heads nod false measure; but it is also certain that many feel what they cannot

transmit, and, with minds full of poetry, produce only vulgar images; like our poor German, who seemed to understand nature, and to love her in her loneliness, and yet with what bleak meagreness of colouring and touch, and still more, with what an utter absence of apparent feeling did he represent the object of his worship!

Two hours ago I should have said, "there are no beggars at Bagnères;" but this morning, while I loitered about, waiting for my bath, a man—I will not say begged of me—but looked at me, and so piteously, that a parish catalogue of pauper-cases could not have said more than did his mournful aspect. He was obviously a stranger and afraid to ask, a forlorn vagrant from another land passing along in wretchedness: he was not old, nor yet maimed, nor even absolutely ragged; but I never saw any living creature look so desolate. A brassy hue, spotted and lifeless, seemed rather laid on his face than fed by the circulation of the life-blood; his eyes were livid, and with a look in them that one was ashamed to call wicked, because there was so much distress in it: but one of the girls at the baths, a handsome, heartless-seeming person, was not so scrupulous, and gave him the epithet of a

"bad vagabond." He might have once been so, but he was now only a wretched man; and when one thinks that this poor creature was once an innocent child, an infant nursed perhaps by a virtuous mother, fondled by an honest father, pressed to warm hearts that never murmured at any hardship that could bring good to the little one, the contrast becomes too touching, the fallen too pitiable, to leave room for a harsh thought, even though it might be a just one.

CHAPTER VII.

VALLEY OF CAMPAN—THE CONVENT OF MEDOUX—A FOUNTAIN AND A CLOISTER—MONKS AS THEY ARE, AND AS THEY WERE—VALUE OF CERTAIN PHRASES—THE PRIORY OF ST. PAUL—GENERAL ASPECT OF THE VALLEY—DEFECTS AND BEAUTIES—A SPIRITED POPULATION—THE BARREL-ORGAN—TARBES—ROAD BETWEEN BAGNERES AND TARBES—L'ELYSEE COTTIN.

THE regular Tempé of the Pyrenees is the valley of Campan. "O beautiful valley!" writes one; "O vale of Thessaly!" exclaims another; while a third likens it to the paradise of the blest; and a fourth, feeling the insufficiency of words, adores in silence.

Every day appeared to me an age till I too had worshipped in this elysium of the living, which opens its page of beauty at a short distance from Bagnères. Just at its entrance reposes the village of Asté, at the foot of the enamelled Heyris, the mountain of flowers, which in the summer months realizes the fabulous beauty of the fields of Enna:

there is no looking at it without thinking, if not talking, of Proserpine, and Dis's waggon, and other sweet poetical creeds that spring up at a touch out of the stores of memory. What a delicious frontispiece! thought I; but as I did not wish to squander admiration, but rather to hoard up for the great occasion, I said nothing.

Stopped at the opening of the valley to look at the fountain of Medoux, urgently recommended by guides to the notice of travellers. It beautifies the garden of what was once a convent of Capucins, now utilized into a saw-mill: the active virtues have superseded the meditative ones, and though evidences of past holiness still mildew on the walls of the refectory, manual labour has routed indolence, and piled up its implements within the cloisters.

The word *cloister* is apt to ally itself in the mind with thought of prayer and contemplation, and for the sake of this alliance, and the feeling of intense repose which it communicates, we often find ourselves disposed to overlook the evil tendencies of monastic institutions, their swarms of drones and heaps of human sacrifices. No doubt the wise and the devout are often habitants of these silent

dwellings; but how limited must be the power of usefulness, the benefit of example, when confined within the walls of a monastery; and how greatly do the labours of a parish-priest, who fulfils his mission worthily, rise in the scale when weighed against the passive or purely personal virtues of the monk. And yet, say what we will of monks, steep our imaginations as we may in the deepest dyes of cloisteral crime, craft, and turbulence, still there is something holy and imposing in the lives of many of the founders of monastic institutions, and in the self-sacrificing spirit of their immediate disciples, to which we look up with an "ingrained instinct of old reverence" not easily destroyed by later impressions. I say many, but by no means all; for there were some amongst them who were monks, only because they could not be kings. But those proud abbots, whose ambition outran the ambition of monarchs, as their influence did their power, who were lifted above their age by the force of superior knowledge, and above the reach of blame by the mute subjection of the multitude, are less imposing at this distance of time in their odour of arrogant domination, than the anchoret in his spirit of sweet and humble piety. Even at the

very moment when reason rejects the worse than useless asceticism of the Carthusian doctrine, we find the history of St. Bruno not unedifying. The austere life, the attenuated figure, the lonely heart,—for, being human, it must have had the sentiment of its solitude,—affect the imagination; the profound conviction almost persuades the mind.

But monks are no longer edifying as in the day of the devout Benedict, the learned Bernard, or the holy Francis; and the southern idlers, who run away from the oar or the spade to fatten on the industry of others,—Capucins and Cordeliers, Minims and Benedictines, preaching Dominicans and begging Franciscans,—dirty, jolly, lazy, and corrupt, with a sprinkling of dark minds (and sometimes perhaps a fine and earnest one) among them, have no influence except over the uninstructed, whose ignorance, carefully fostered, is their pasture-ground.

For two things, however, let monks be honoured:—they were long the treasurers of literature, and to their care the learned owe those precious stores, which, but for the knowledge that appreciating their value laboured to preserve them, would have been scattered like the sibyl's leaves on

the winds of the desert. Praise be to them for their love of letters, and their love of nature; the last witnessed by the delicious sites on which their monasteries are placed, the first proved by irrefutable vouchers. If they beg in the hamlets, there are yet some who exercise the virtue of hospitality in the frozen wilderness: all must wish a pious permanency to the Benedictines of Mont St. Bernard,—and to such others as have chosen the desert—traversed in danger—as their dwelling-place, that they may fully exercise the power of usefulness, which is charity.

This convent of Medoux is not precisely a situation to be adduced in confirmation of the high picturesque taste of the monks; but it is quiet and flowery, with a soft, meadowy beauty and fine hills about it, and fresh streams flying round the house and through it, and probably—as every thing must have its wrong side—damp walls, and legions of rats. The convent was suppressed at the Revolution, and is now inhabited, as our guide informed us, "par cinq ou six de ces messieurs." I did not inquire who they were, being occupied in reflecting on the advantages and uses of the phrase "ces messieurs." Instead of the circuitous ex-

planation, which is with us the usual consequence of a thoughtless question, " ces messieurs " steps in, cutting short tedious details, economizing words and time, and sparing the useless enumeration of Mr. such-a-one and his son, or his wife's brother-in-law, or his sister's nephew, and so on. *Monsieur*, too, is invaluable; what an agreeable change from " my master," or " your master," (though the first has something faithful and revering in its sound when pronounced by an old servant,) and the respectful but not demeaning " monsieur." What an improvement it would be on the my lord duke or Sir Harry air, with which our London domestics call their *employers* " Mr. A." or " Mr. B." The pity is that we cannot put *sir* into the third person.

" O fountain! when in you shall I
Myself, eas'd of unpleasing thoughts, espy?"

I do not know why Cowley's quaint lines came into my head, when I found myself at the fountain of Medoux, for I certainly felt more disposed towards the indulgence of pleasant, than of anxious fancies; yet so it was. The fountain is a very clear pool, fed by a gush of swift water of ample

volume, but not a prettier one than many of the wood-side pools in which our cows love to luxuriate; limpid however as Arethusa, or perhaps Helicon; with a raw summer-house close to it, and a prodigious chestnut—that is, a chestnut of prodigious height, with a crown of foliage like a real date tree, and no lateral branches. The gardener said it had grown so; but it looked to me pared and unnatural, something in the way of a *mat de cocagne*—a spoil-all of a thought; and so, instead of spicy groves, bulbuls, gilt lattices, and other delicate oriental images which its form might have called up, came the garland of prize toys, with its train of town-holiday associations.

At Medoux the valley opens with a calm and gracious aspect, which it preserves throughout the whole of its extent. Soon after the Prieuré of St. Paul presents itself on a mound, tucked in by a cold wall and a treble row of poplars. The priory of St. Paul! the very name has a whole page of pious story in it,—a hermitage in the wild, or at least a grey monastery grown old on the brink of a glassy lake, and nodding over its clear still waters; with rooks cawing in the ruined belfries, and colonizing the venerable grove, once the echo of holy

sound, but now of their rude *angelus*. But it neither resembles the lonely hermitage, nor yet the ivied ruin; it is a pretty-looking house, in a charming position, outwardly spoiled by the aforesaid bastion wall and cold poplars,—indeed wanting nothing but painted port-holes and wooden guns, to make it (as seen from the road) just such a concern as sometimes shows itself in the suburbs of a sea-port town, and to which its owner fondly gives the name of Gibraltar, or Saragossa, or some other place eminent in the annals of war.

It has, however, a reputation that reached us at Paris, and a view that merits—if not all, at least half that is said of it; perhaps more. A charming look into a glen, from one of the drawing-room windows, greatly took my fancy; there are other striking points, but not much table-ground,—the house, indeed, stands on a mere bracket. It might be made an excellent one, and I believe without much expense; and a little pains tastefully taken, would convert the whole into a charming summer residence, airy and shaded as a bird's nest. It belongs to an English family, who have not visited it (as its neglected appearance denotes) for many years; and who would willingly, their farmer told us, either

sell, or let it. I was national enough to hear with pleasure that they were not the planters of the poplars.

The valley of Campan may be called the valley of the thousand streams, and its abundant sources are so adroitly managed, that every root of grass seems moistened like a precious flower; the result is a freshness that becomes a feeling, and renews the mind. At one side a long rocky rampart, thinly and partially greened, guards the valley; at the other, swelling hills oppose the living verdure of their rich pastures, their pleasant cabins shaded by broad trees, their Arcadian beauty, life, and vigour, to the stony stillness or decrepid vegetation of their opposite neighbours. The splendid colouring of these emerald hills, gently detached from each other by glens darkly and richly tinted, that look like the avenues to more mysterious regions, the atmosphere of happiness which surrounds the dwellings, the wealth of pastoral and agricultural life thrown about full handed, dilate the heart. It is a morally beautiful country; for in its velvet meadows, its fine unshorn trees, and plains fertilized by the skilful management of many rills into a germinating freshness that might

become a world just created, we see the results of industry and the control of sagaciousness; yet still, even while acknowledging its loveliness—and more—feeling it, I cannot help being disappointed.

If it be, indeed, the pearl of the Pyrenees, I must want taste, for I cannot think it so; but mine is a solitary opinion, and perhaps a wrong one, for all who see it fall into ecstasies. It is a sunny bucolic full of fat herds and baa-ing flocks, breathing May sweets, and singing to a joyous measure the sports and pleasures of a country life; but it is not in the highest class of nature's poetry, even though the Pic du Midi looks down upon it; it has not the depth or boldness of many less talked of valleys, nor the deep colouring of romance that belongs to others; the chain of hills that guards it at one side is rather stony than majestic, and the Adour, which circulates through it, is neither an impetuous torrent or a full and glassy stream. What it may be after the melting of the snows, or in a rainy season, I cannot say; but at present its bed is in many places half dry and encumbered with stones, and its stream scanty; though often pleasantly bordered with a soft country fringe of hazel, ash,

and other brook-becoming things. There are no dark far-off stretches, or unexpected developements of beauty; no beckoning gloom into which imagination enters with hushed breath; you see it at once: the road ascends, but so inobviously, that as you go along it seems flat; it passes through the villages of Beaudéan and Sainte Marie, and the flourishing bourg of Campan which lies between them, hitching a tag of town-feeling on the pastoral.

There is unquestionably something very gracious and beautiful in the form of the hill sides, and in their smoothly-rounded outlines; yet (I speak with diffidence of a thing so vaunted) it appeared to me inferior to its immense reputation. It is a kind, unworried nature—rich, redolent, and peaceful; remarkable for its abundant population, and the sweet home-looking habitations that cluster on its gentle declivities, leaving no spot without its shaded dwelling and green domain,—green literally as an emerald; but I doubt if it would repay a very distant pilgrimage, (the world's end has been talked of); and I doubt, too, if in the lateral valleys some spots may not be found on which the vagrant fancy, the loving thought, might settle with more

delight, than even on the swelling valley of Campan.

The great charm of this valley (at least to my eyes) is its look of youth, vigour, and present happiness. There are many valleys here fresh, bright, and dewy; but this is steeped in such day-break tints, that to an eye accustomed to an antique and decaying nature, to the crumbling mountain in which the principle of destruction alone seems active, or stern rock whose impenetrable surface repels vegetation, it appears like something newborn, that has yet the whole of its long and prolific course to run: it carries the mind forward into a bright futurity, while valleys encumbered by huge masses of granite, with which the fall of some traditional mountain has choked their issues, announce the dissolution of nature, and turn thought into a more sombre channel.

The inhabitants are perhaps as remarkable as their valley; they are robust and handsome: some of the women appeared to us strikingly so, with fine-drawn features and magnificent eyes. Their air of gaiety amounts to boldness, their animal spirits seem to encumber them, and they throw off the superfluity into the first channel that presents

itself, sometimes giving way in the high tide of their merriment to a violence of voice and gesture, which, with a little pushing, might spell itself wrath. They are reputed hospitable, frank, and generous —qualities on which passionate people usually pride themselves; fine qualities, certainly, and delightful ones, only too often conceived to be a sufficient atonement for the "precious balms which break the head." The *spirit*, as it is called, that knocks down with one hand and applies the poultice with the other, is one which the hard-working classes of society—especially the women, usually wish to possess, and greatly admire. I have heard more than one person thank their stars that they had a *spirit*, considering it not only as a good defensive armour, but as, somehow or other, synonymous with a heart. I should think it was universally admired in the valley of Campan, where the antique character of the peasant of Bigorre is said to be preserved in its freshness, with the venerable green still upon it.

That they are a happy people every thing attests, and this very happiness includes the probability of their being a virtuous one; for disorder once introduced amongst the labouring classes, is quickly

followed by its inevitable consequences,—want and wretchedness. But it is impossible to pass through their villages on a holiday, when the population is at large and unoccupied, without being struck by the air of bold mirth, of decided *insouciance* of which I have spoken, and which is too general not to be characteristic. Though reputed generous, they are not insensible to the charms of wealth, and, when the times permit, have the custom of passing annually into Spain to assist in the harvest labours; but since the coming of the cholera, that source of gain has been closed up, and their industry limited to the tardier harvest of their own fields.

Tuesday. A barrel-organ under the windows, (the first that we have heard in the Pyrenees,) playing the *Pescatore*, a bit of Rossini, and then *God Save the King* for the absentees. I know few persons who are not affected—more or less, by hearing a familiar air played by a barrel-organ: when a melody is sufficiently popular to make its way to this street instrument, it is generally sure to be *real* music, and music too with a crowd of recollections in it. Besides, attention not being directed from the sound to the merits or demerits

of the performance, the strength of the feeling is increased by its singleness, and an effect not unfrequently produced upon the mind, which the scantiness of the means employed scarcely seems to account for.

I remember once hearing an odd kind of man say, that when he was in a foreign land, nothing made him so melancholy as the music of a barrel-organ. I thought the emotion natural: no doubt, the sound of this simple instrument had awakened feelings of home-tenderness, remembrances of fire-side enjoyment, fond household thoughts, (always melancholy ones when the hearth is far away,) that, gaining at once the mastery over newer sensations, turned gaiety into sadness. I knew the feeling, and entered into it; but I had made a wrong guess. He could not bear to hear it, he said. And why? because that in winter it made him think of oyster-shops, fresh lobsters, and Drury Lane; in summer, of Piccadilly, the Brighton coaches, Grange's ice-shop, and the Haymarket. But after all, though the objects of his sad remembrances seemed to me singular ones, yet the ground-work was still the home feeling,—a porter-pot and stage-coach feeling,

perhaps, but native as the heart-imbued images which more delicately constructed minds work into the same canvas.

The good people of the mountains talk of Tarbes, as the inhabitants of the small towns within fifteen miles of London do of that land monster. It is the capital of the Hautes, and Pau of the Basses Pyrénées; but it is not so fair or so engaging—at least to my mind, as its loftier sister; indeed we thought it rather a watery-looking place, as we drove yesterday through its empty streets; however, we are told that it is considered as so attractive, that strangers who only meant to pass through it, often remain to live. It is something (indeed a great deal) to have the wide and majestic screen of the Pyrenees always drawn out before one in its prodigious power and beauty, even though the immediate garnishing may be—as it seemed to us—insipid; and perhaps one should not ask for more than quiet and fertility in the neighbourhood of so much splendour; both are found here, and there is certainly no place from which the glorious mountains are seen to more advantage. The houses have a half-mourning air, from the general

use made of grey and black in their exterior decorations; but they, like the streets, are prepossessingly clean, and watered, like a Swiss town, with running streams that, as in Froissart's time, are "aussi cleres, comme belle eaue de fontaine." It has, moreover, a Prado and a Place Maubourquet, shaded by fine old trees, broad branched and stately; and a Place Marcadieu, of great extent, where a market of very attractive reputation is held every fifteen days. It is said to be one of the most stirring and commercial in France, and is remarkable for the variety of people and costumes which it brings together,—Spaniards, Basques, Béarnois, Bigorrais, presenting a curious and original *coup d'œil*, and making a pleasant picture of the Marcadieu, which in its nakedness of yesterday looked particularly raw and glaring.

Tarbes piques itself on an origin, lost in the night of time. It was the Bigorra of Cæsar, and the Turba of the later Romans. After having been devasted alternately by all "the harnessed millions of the north," sacked by the army of Abderamen, pillaged by the Normans, stormed and plundered again and again in the civil and religious wars of the sixteenth century, and condemned to a return

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of all the calamities which its unswerving adherence to orthodox Catholicism had brought down upon it in the time of the Visigoths, it is now a picture of peace, and looks as if it had never heard the sound of drum or trumpet. It has a public library (we are told), but no shows. The inhabitants are said to be sociably inclined, and to cultivate music with considerable success.

On the road from Bagnères to Tarbes, and not very far from the latter place, is the Château d'Odos, where Margaret de Valois died in 1549. Not the Margaret of whom le bon Henri

> " Fut pendant plus d'une année
> Le très affligé mari,"

but the Margaret—queen too of Navarre—whose name has been made familiar to our memories, by her Boccaccio tales and love of literature.

This road is not among the fine things here; but it is very agreeable, and remarkable for the number of villages (eight, I believe,) through which it passes in the space of five leagues. There is a pleasant air of country comfort about the people and their habitations; and the fashion, almost general in the Pyrenees, of framing round the doors and windows with stone or marble, gives a neat

appearance to the cottages, as the snug dress does a decent one to the people. We saw it in an advantageous moment, when the birds were singing, and the sun shining, and the women all at work busy and bustling,—thrashing, winnowing, dibbling, stacking, and quite as active as farmers' men. It is true they work for themselves, and interest quickens industry not a little; the peasants are all small proprietors, who make the most of their limited domains, mow their grass twice or thrice a-year, carry their crops home on their heads, cultivate maize, live upon it, and contrive to be as fine a people on this vegetable diet, as any beef eaters that I know of.

Tarbes is the winter retreat of many of the proprietors of Cauteretz. It is a préfecture, (which among its advantages includes a reception at least once a-week,) possesses a regular theatre—I think we were told, and what our informer called more town-resources than Bagnères,—meaning perhaps markets, or stationary society. Living at Bagnères is good and reasonable; nor did we find any cause to complain of Cauteretz, though farther removed from the facilities of luxury. The izard is dressed there in perfection, and the trout of the Lac de

Gaube has few rivals; but the minnows of the brook, with whose qualities one is unluckily more familiar, are mean eating.

L'Elysée Cottin has something affected in its sound, though not in its sight: it is but a short distance from Bagnères, yet an out-of-the-world sort of thing notwithstanding. We passed half the morning wandering by its wild brook, and sitting under the spreading shade of the tree in the deep hollow,—the hollow beneath the beautiful hill, fresh as spring, and silent as the grove. It may have been here, in the shadow of her favourite tree,* that she, who has given her name to this solitude, drew out from the obscurity to which modesty had consigned it, that most perfect image of filial piety, the courageous and devoted Elizabeth; the Russian girl with the Roman heart,—or better than the Roman, the tender, glowing, self-sacrificing, and unswervable one of the Christian martyr. It may have been, while looking on these objects, that she traced the log-hut by the Arctic lake, and the pilgrimage through the frozen desert, —at least one loves to think so: it makes the air seem purer.

* Since (I have heard) cut down.

Perhaps this gentle spirit, for such it appears that she really was, offered in her moral construction one of the most singular enigmas ever presented to the observer of the human mind. Cited as a model of virtue, she has left behind her pages which we dare not put into the hands of our daughters; and with the heart of an angel (as those who knew her say) and the most scrupulous delicacy of conduct, blushed not to have imagined and indited scenes, from which minds virtuously organized turn away in disgust. Madame Cottin has described the abnegation of self, the heroic enthusiasm of filial love, the pure, yet passionate devotedness of a new heart, in all their vital freshness. It is from sympathy alone that such tints are extracted; but in what blotted corner of the same mind did she find the sombre and licentious colouring with which a portion of her works, eminent in some parts for purity and moral feeling, are so lamentably imbued?

CHAPTER VIII.

BEAUTY NOT ALWAYS RELISHED—THE HORN OF ORLANDO —PENE DE L'HEYRIS—THE TUFT OF GENTIAN—THE OLD SHEPHERD—ASTE—ITS RUINS—ROYAL FEELINGS TENDERLY USED—THE CAGOTS—WHO WERE THEY?—CONJECTURES—THEIR WRETCHEDNESS AND PATIENCE.

I ONCE happened to sit at the table d'hôte at Berne next to an Englishman, who, when some one mentioned the passage of the Gemmi, muttered to his friend, "I hope we are not going to hear any more about the beauties of nature: I wish people would talk of something else,—always the same subject, and one is so sick of it."

In the mountain Pyrenees this poor man would have died of repletion, for here is nothing but nature. No palaces, no temples, no cathedrals,—Saxon, Gothic, or Morescan; no Roman ruins, (though some slight memorials,) no fragments of Arab or Byzantine architecture: now and then a church with the Templars' mark upon it, or a tower with the feodal one; but no monuments of art, no

great and general records. Home ones indeed there are, of high and honourable interest to the children of the land, and fine instances of individual heroism and noble-mindedness, which contemporary admiration has made historical. But the country of the Pyrenees (taken in its ancient extension) is not one remarkable as the scene of great and generally influential events; it has not made for itself a lofty and distinct position in history, it is not vital with mighty recollections, like some mountain countries which at once recur to the mind, nor full of antique associations,—close, identical, and fixed to the very spot by still extant memorials that serve at once for history and picture, like others; but appears to have been most remarkable as the road traversed by Romans, Carthaginians, Goths, Visigoths, Franks, and Saracens, when they passed onwards to their various destinies. I speak of the French Pyrenees, the mountains themselves: not of Roncevallos, which stands at the Spanish side, and singly (as I am told) as a high historical memorial; nor of fierce Arragon, Navarre, Béarn, Foix, Acquitaine, or any of those countries that lie at the feet of the great chain, and now form, under new denominations, its large de-

partments; nor of the ancient cities in the plains, —Perpignan and others, which now call themselves cities of the Pyrenees; but of the mountains alone, and their inkernelled valleys.

It is true, that the demi-fabulous traditions of Charlemagne's exploits between the Ebro and the Pyrenees, and the march of the mighty monarch and his paladins, remain with it as poetry: the name of Orlando has, with the help of Turpin and Ariosto, sanctified many of its scenes. That knight of knights, he of the fleet horse, the strong sword, and the burning heart, expired within the shadow of its mountains, leaving the magic of his name and story behind him; and the echo of the last blast, the dying one, which burst his magic horn, to sound still upon the ear of fancy,—fancy that willingly takes in all the romance yet extant in the legends of the Pyrenees with the fond credulity that turns away from reason.

Religious persecutions have stained this beautiful earth; internal feuds, and unequal strifes between the native chieftains (often wise governors and brave men) and the more potent rulers of the land, crowd its annals; but to the passing traveller its interest is in its exceeding beauty, the sweet-

ness of its climate, and the pleasant qualities of its inhabitants. To hearts in which the voice of nature always finds an echo, the Pyrenees offer treasures. I would say something of the Péne* de l'Heyris, to which we mounted up yesterday, of our halts under the broad shade of the beech or the fir, of the wild glens down below and the many tier of mountains up above, falling back, line behind line, until they grow skyey and melt into the heavens, but that it is such a thousand times told tale. We talk of trees and streams, of the wild hill and silent valley with fondness, with delight, vainly imagining that we have set them out in all the various lights and shades in which we have ourselves admired their loveliness. But no: there they stand like a file of musketeers, each one the duplicate of its neighbour. It is not the fault of nature, for imagination cannot compass her infinite variety,—is there a tint that does not glisten in the fields of her robe? is there a flower that does not bloom in her garland? is not the light of heaven in her eye, and all its changeful beauty, in her aspect?—but it is ours, who cannot translate it all into words.

* Péne—*summit*, in the language of the country.

The ascent to the Péne de l'Heyris is by the pantières; the nets were up, and the sentinel on guard in his basket,—but no birds. This has been a bad season, too sunny, too constantly fine; a grey day, or a foggy one, is usually chosen by the pigeons for their migrations, and we have had a month of September (to-day the 22nd) almost without a cloud. From the summit of the Heyris grand and beautiful things are visible; parts of Languedoc and the old Guienne, Mont Perdu, the high and mighty Maladetta, and, stretching eastward, the Canigou of Roussillon. So said the peasant who served us as guide, adding with a decisive wave of the hand, "Ils y sont tous;" but being a man rather of general knowledge than minute information, he declined entering into particulars, and left us to guess out things as we could.

The flowers of the mountains, the rare ones that in the gay summer time cover the turf with "quaint enamell'd eyes," were all gone, and the close sward had only the common complement of daisies. I love flowers every where, dearly love them; but the brightest garden ones, spreading their living freshness over a soft summer mountain, charm my fancy less delightfully than the sight of

a tuft of gentian, blowing amidst the rigours of a higher region, and making enamoured fellowship with its unchangeable austerities. It tells one such a sweet story—that beautiful gentian of the desert! deepening, brightening, strengthening in the keen air, that has just blown off the snow from its sweet blossoms; friends with ice, friends with wind, friends with the cold rain which, congealing on its azure leaves, covers them with fanciful concretions. Even the hardy rhododendron, that loves to carpet the high steep with its lavish blossoms, stops short of the frozen desert, which the skyey gentian decorates preferringly, though wandering sometimes from its lofty summit down to the nearer solitude, and opening its blue eyes among daisies and meadow-sweet, which have clambered up out of their low warm haunts to give it a meeting.

In the heart of the narrow valleys through which we descended, is the cabin of a herdsman, who goes up to the hills in the first week of June with his cattle, the combined property of the inhabitants of his village; and remains there until the last week in September, or later if the season admit. He supplied us with fresh milk of most delicious flavour, served in a bright skillet, with a

wooden ladle floating as usual on its surface; a most opportune refreshment, as the wine which we had brought with us had been spilt on the road. The chairmen, wiser than we are, avoid all chance of cracked bottles, and confine their sour beverage to a capacious skin, out of which they drink, after the Spanish fashion, without suffering the pipe through which the liquor passes, to touch their lips.

Our shepherd (an old man) rubbed his hands in delight, when he talked of next Friday as the day fixed for his return to the plains; exclaiming, with the concentrated egotism of age fastening eagerly on its last enjoyment,—"Ah, then I shall sleep again upon a mattress!" It was obviously the thought of his mattress,—not of his family, that stirred up his heart; not but his bed of straw was comfortable (he said) and wholesome, and he had an excellent *linceul** to cover himself with. A gay idea, enough to keep one waking of a winter's night, or a summer's one either; but a wedding garment could not have sat more lightly on the shepherd, whose mind was still in its bud,—thinly filled, but fresh as the kernel of a young filbert,

* Literally, a winding-sheet.

except in the single instance of tenacious caducity with which he clung to his mattress.

For six-and-twenty summers this same shepherd had been chosen by the commune as their regular Palemon, but this year he had feared that his age would have been against him. However, he had the good fortune to be once more appointed to the important function "Let us have the old shepherd," said the mayor: and the "I, even I Artaxerxes the king," was not expressed with more pride than he seemed to feel in repeating the words of his village magistrate. Yet this much-ambitioned honour has nothing that seems very inviting about it, for the pay is poor and the life comfortless;—a bed of straw, a mess of maize, out gathering in the cattle till nine at night, then up again at two; and in case of sudden illness, none to help the sick or shrive the dying. Sick, however, he never was, our shepherd said, though sometimes frightened, when the wolves came down upon him, as happened now and then in the teeth of his vigilance.

I have seldom seen a head more prosaically organized than this old man's; yet the vanity which mountaineers always feel about their mountains, took something like the shape of poetry

when he talked of L'Heyris in its season of flowers, lamenting, almost pathetically, our not having seen it in its beauty. "Ah! (said he,) you would never have forgotten it: it would have staid with you for ever."

Just as the sun was setting, we found ourselves in the village of Asté, wondering at the exquisite verdure of the meadows which, after three months without three days of rain, dazzles the eye, and inhaling the aroma of the box-hedges,—a common odour in the Pyrenees, and a pleasant one. As we stopped to repose, a woman approached my chair with a sort of town sweep, that showed she was not a peasant of Asté; she wished to have told me that there was something that had once belonged to the Grammonts to be seen there, better worth looking at than any thing in "ce pauvre village," as she added in a low tone of confiding scorn; but she had been too long away from the city of her joy (Toulouse, I think,) to have preserved her vernacular tongue intact, and I was dull enough not to discover, through the patois with which it was encrusted, that the castle (a ruin now) to which she was so anxious to attract our notice, had been the abode of Corissande (or Diane, as she is sometimes called,) d'Andouins,

when the *vert gallant* vowed that faith to her, which had been pledged to so many,—from the tender and faithful Fleurette of the bowers of Nerac, to the politic and ambitious Marquise de Verneuil. This weak part of their hero's character is swallowed as a sort of a virtue by the good people hereabouts, just as we, in the same feeling, take to our bosoms the legend of Fair Rosamond, or the true history of Shore's wife.

Asté is an agreeable village in a sweet position, but with an under-population of goîtrous throats and idiotic faces painfully demonstrative. There was a poor soul, a boy, with the genuine fool's coat, all of a size from top to bottom, buttoned behind, and a bit of red rag in his cap, who amused himself by dipping first one foot and then the other in a pool of dirty water. A jeering girl laughed at him, and poor Motley responded to her mirth with a galvanic grin; the jaw opening as on a hinge, and snapping back again into its position like a spring-lock. The barrenness of utter idiotism is less painful to the heart than this faint, sad show of answering intelligence; but a woman near me said he was happy—happier much than she was.

This boy was not a cagot, but simply a crétin, (the names are often applied indiscriminately,) a

being deprived of the faculty of reason, and but faintly endowed with that of instinct. The real cagot is rarely seen in the social haunts of man: the small remains of this mysterious race, unaccounted for in the history of nations or of people, though no longer exposed to the barbarous persecutions of their fellow-beings, are still strangers to their hearths, and aliens from their intimate communion. They can, it is true, enter a church at its great gate,* and kneel down with others at the altar; if they cannot pay for shoes, they need not wear them, and are no longer obliged to bear the badge of their ignominy (the foot of a goose) upon their garments. But the cagot, like the pariah, has still his home in the desert, where he dwells with others of his long-proscribed race. No other smoke mixes with that which rises from his humble cabin; no other hand presses his in amity. Debased by persecution until the traces of his human nature have been nearly effaced from his pale and stupified countenance, and almost, if that countenance may be allowed to testify truly, from

* Formerly the cagots were only allowed to enter by a small side-door, through which contaminated aperture no others ever passed; and were forbidden to go barefooted, lest the stones which they had trodden on should be infected by the contact.

his mind also; condemned to perpetuate hereditary taints, hereditary deformities, created by persecution and made innate by ages of misery, and by the concentration within its own limited channel of that blood with which no other blood would mingle, it is no wonder that the cagot should have become mentally and physically degraded below the common standard of humanity.

Who were the cagots originally? and what was the terrible crime,—perhaps misfortune, which put them under the ban? By what right were they cut off from all communication with their species, sold, bequeathed? walled out like lepers, forbidden to pray with other men, denied the rights of Christian sepulture? and yet, as it seems, for no evidence exists to the contrary, untainted by any contagious malady, and if ever rebels against the Christian faith, no longer so, but Catholics like their persecutors,* when in the earlier periods of

* The cagots were known to be Christians in the year 1000, as is proved by ancient writings mentioned by Marca, and there is every reason to suppose had long been so, even if they had ever been otherwise. Marca also refutes the idea (once general) of their being tainted with leprosy, quoting the opinion of certain learned physicians employed to ascertain the truth or falsehood of the imputation, and who pronounced them of healthy race, "forte, vigoureuse, et pleine de santé."

the middle ages we find them noticed as a race apart, an undesignated race, existing in a state of reprobation, the cause of which was, like their origin, involved in darkness. Were they, as Ramond supposes, a remnant of the Goths paled out from all communication with those who had been outraged by their cruelty? Were they Jews, or Arians, or Saracens fallen into the hands of their conquerors? There exists no record of their first coming; they did not appear at different, though not distant periods, like the tribe now known all over Europe by the various names of Bohemian, Tzingani, Zingari, Zinguener, Gitano, Cygana, or Gipsy:* they had not, like that mysterious race, a language, a complexion, a physiognomy, obviously and entirely foreign and peculiar to themselves; they had no traditions, no remnants of ancient customs, nor has any record come down to us of the crime, whether against God or man, for which they have been so horribly punished.

According to some old writers, the cagots were a tribe of Goths banished from Spain as an infected

* In Germany, the first appearance of the people whom we call Gipsies was (according to Sir Thomas Brown) in the year 1400; in Switzerland they were seen in 1422; in Italy in the same year; in France in 1427. (See Harriot's *Observations on the Oriental Origin of the Romnichal.*)

race, in which some terrible malady had become hereditary. Belleforét believes them to be the descendants of the Visigoths, defeated by Clovis in the terrible battle of Vouillé, when Alaric was slain and his army annihilated; and those who follow this opinion, derive the name of cagots from Caas Goths—Chiens de Goths. I have read, that in ancient acts they were called *Chrétiens Gezetains*, which name Marca supposes was given them from Gieza,* a leper punished by the prophet Elisha for false dealing. The same learned historian considers this miserable race to be a remnant of the Saracens who, called into Spain by Count Julien to avenge the dishonour of his daughter Florida, subdued the country, and from thence carried their victorious arms into France: but being defeated with tremendous slaughter between Tours and Poitiers by Charles Martel, fled into the mountains of the Pyrenees; where, degraded below the standard of humanity by the cruelty of their conquerors, they were suffered to exist as living expiations of an audacious act, to which ill success had given the character of an atrocious one. In support of this

* In our translation, Gehazi,—the servant of Elisha, to whom and to his race the leprosy of Naaman, the Syrian captain of the king's host, was destined (as a punishment for his avarice and falsehood) to cleave for ever.—2 Kings, ch. v.

opinion, it is said that the plain between Tarbes and Lourdes, called the Lanne Maurinne, or Lande des Maures, takes its name from a desperate battle fought there in the early part of the eighth century, between the fugitive remains of the Saracen army and the people of the country, who, commanded by their chief Meselin, rose up against and destroyed them. The tradition adds, that the few who escaped, finding all the passes into Spain closed against them, abjured Mahometanism, and giving themselves up to inevitable degradation, became (as some believe) the root of this unfortunate race.

Some remains of the cagots are said still to exist in Guienne, and also in Britanny and Navarre, as well as in the Pyrenees; but every where they have been the victims of the same frightful persecutions. When Ramond visited the mountains in 1787, something of compassion had begun to mingle with the feeling of horror which they had so long inspired; but this charitable sentiment had come too late to be of much comfort to these unhappy creatures. Goîtres, and the peculiar paleness and abasement of countenance which indicates the disposition to crétinism, or its existence, had, as I have already observed, become hereditary among them; and served to prolong that feeling

of alienation which still existed, though in a less inveterate form, towards this outcast tribe. The small door through which alone they had been for ages permitted to enter a church, was, it is true, walled up; they might work, and buy, and be taken to their graves like other people; but no one would intermarry with them, and their dwellings were still apart from the habitations of other men. At present their existence seems altogether forgotten, indeed so entirely, that many consider the race as extinct; and all whom I have questioned on the subject have either been of that opinion, or at most answered doubtingly, with a vague idea that there might be still a remnant existing in some remote valley, but without any thing like certainty.

Indeed, the subject has long ceased to excite either interest or curiosity, and yet it is well calculated to awaken both,—curiosity, by the story of a people, of whose origin neither contemporary record or preserved tradition makes mention; a people publicly persecuted as if for some unimaginable crime, yet not a notice extant—written or remembered—of its nature or commission; and interest, by the fate of this same wretched caste—a bruised and trampled-on race of fellow-creatures,

in whom even the brute abjectness, the utter abasement to which injustice had reduced them, could not extinguish the sentiment of affection, or weaken the power or permanence of those tender and domestic feelings which Ramond, who visited their huts, so touchingly and beautifully describes in a passage often quoted; where, alluding to the dim retreats in which they were used to hide themselves, he says, "J'y ai trouvé des frères qui s'aimoient avec cette tendresse, qui est un besoin plus pressant chez les hommes isolés. J'y ai vu des femmes, dont l'amour avait quelque chose de soumis et de dévoué, qu' inspirent la faiblesse et le malheur." Poor wretches! how touching it is to see this first, last, sweetest feeling of the heart lingering still within it, when all other human ones have been nearly trampled out of their sanctuary. And what a lesson to those who curse Providence in the impious rage of disappointed vanity, is the cagot's patient maintenance of religious faith, his pious observance of religious duties, his unshaken trust in God's promises! For him the iron chain, which he has worn on earth, becomes a golden one, as joining itself to the links of hope, it graduates upwards until it ends in heaven!

CHAPTER IX.

BAGNERES DE BIGORRE, CONTINUED—MONSIEUR ARISTIPPE—OTHELLO TRAVESTIED—DUCIS' DESDEMONA—MOONLIGHT—CASTEL MOULET—SILENCE AND SOUNDS—LE BOIS DE MADAME DE GRAMMONT—COURT SHADOWS AND FEODAL ONES—VALLEY OF SCRISSE AND ITS CABINS—THE VALLEY OF TREBONS AND ITS MOUNTAINS—EFFECTS NATURAL AND CONTRADICTORY—A PAUSE—NATIONAL DISHES AND DRESSES—LES CABANES D'ORDENSEDE—THE COWSLIP OF ST. MARIE.

"C'EST étonnant! Monsieur n'a jamais entendu parler de Monsieur Aristippe?" exclaimed the directress of the theatre when E—— stopped at her bureau yesterday. And so she sat about enlightening his ignorance on the subject of this illustrious personage, the sublime pupil of the great Talma, who being on his travels, and finding himself, as an English housemaid would say, *promiscuously* * at Bagnères, had yielded to the

* I have frequently remarked, that amongst the uneducated classes in England, the word *promiscuous* is often used for casual. "I met him promiscuously in Oxford-

wishes of the public, and kindly consented to enact the arduous part of Othello for its gratification. From the same benevolent motive, the troop—I mean the company,—who had never stepped out of the comic line, have agreed to *Melpomene* it for one night only. "Il y aura foule," added the directress; so partly in honour of Shakspeare, and partly from curiosity, we determined to swell the throng.

I shall say nothing of the senators, (not but those noble personages were, as usual, eminent in Tyrian purple and cats' tails,) for Othello soon appeared, and of course absorbed all our attention. He came on with considerable fracas, simply dressed in a tunic of striped cotton, edged with a fringe of tinsel tags, with easy bed-gown sleeves giving full play to the arm, and a festoon hanging behind in the simple style of cottage upholstery. His face blazed like a copper kettle newly furbished up, and his figure, though alternately poised in graceful obeisance, or fiercely elevated in barbaric pride, was somewhat ignoble. But the Moor was no Adonis, so we had little

street," said a cook-maid once in my hearing, speaking of a casual rencontre with the footman of her heart.

right to be difficult. The gentle Desdemona accompanied her lord, and thus saved him the trouble of sending for her "to the sagittary;" and while he bellowed out his defence,—assaulting rather than conciliating the reverend signors, stood beside him in a scanty petticoat of scarlet, stretched almost to splitting over her Brobdignagian person.

Illustrious Aristippe! if you have failed to move the critics of Bagnères, it was not from want of due exertion; your declamation was in the very first style of the *Conservatoire*, mouthed to rule,—"all sound and fury signifying nothing." But the eye was large and white, and the visage calf like; altogether recalling the image of a certain gooseberry, which (as *Galignani's Messenger* recently informed us,) gardeners distinguish by the name of 'the roaring lion.' Perhaps it may have merely been a political allusion, and that there may be no such gooseberry, though the aforesaid *Messenger* spoke of one in a garden near Chelsea; but if such a thing does exist, Aristippe, in eye a gooseberry and in voice a roaring lion, must be its very type.

But peace be with him! he chose a blanket for his murdering robe: Macbeth prefers a flow-

ered night-gown; so does Cato of Utica, when from his "lacquered chair" he soliloquizes on the immortality of the soul; but Othello Aristippe thinks otherwise. Adieu, illustrious Moor! peace be with thee—peace and pardon! but for Monsieur Ducis, who has so cruelly outraged the great name of Shakspeare, what shall we do with him? Shall we leave him (as the haberdashers say) to the judgment of a discerning public, and so make his crime his punishment? But, jesting apart, it is difficult to imagine a mind so viciously constructed, as to have conceived the idea that the pure and beautiful character of Desdemona, the fair ideal of virtuous love, could receive a higher interest from being deprived of the sacred name of wife. Yet Ducis was (they say) a moral character; but virtuous love did not suit the times, and the public would have laughed at the idea of a man, even though a Moor, being jealous of his own wife: what a satire on the age!

How calmly the moon queens it to-night in the still heavens,—the melancholy and majestic moon, touching the mountains with her gentle necroman-

tic light, and spiritualizing their solid forms into shadows. The sun opens its broad eye and searches into every recess of nature, drawing out all things, whether mean or beautiful, from their hiding-place; but the uninquisitive moon developes only the grand and graceful outline, and throws her softening veil over the frequent ruggedness of the details. A cottage, poor perhaps and naked by daylight, seems, when it is closed and still with the moonbeams lying on it, like something holy, within whose sacred precincts the blest are sleeping; a mountain, which in the glare of noon may wear a hard and ungracious aspect, like a pavilion suspended from the heavens. The moonlit mountain presents an image of strength in repose that soothes the mind; we forget its customary sternness in the silver dreams that bear us upwards to the beneficial source of light and beauty.

The mind too has, like nature, its sunlights and moonlights. I believe the delight with which we look upon a scene that affects the imagination may, in a great measure, be ascribed to a certain vagueness, an undefined sensation of pleasure, enjoyed without being analyzed, which fills up every chink of the mind. A kind of mental atmosphere is

formed by its influence, in which the past, the present, the future are blended together in tender and harmonious fusion. We float along with the clouds, we look over the mountains, we run its course with the river, or follow the flow of valley. The imagination can, like Ariel, "tread the ooze of the salt deep," or mingle with the stars of the firmament. The colouring of the mountain brings back a recollection; the perfume of a flower awakens a thought; every cloud has a vision in it; every wave seems a messenger to the fancy; the mind settles no where, but floats like a bird who, wrapped in the sense of present enjoyment, poises its wings, and leaves its destiny to the air that sustains it. These are its moonlight moments, and while their influence endures, our thoughts are seldom closely concentrated; when the strong sun returns, the mind becomes less idealized, fancy shifts into certainty, and the vague dreaminess is supplanted by more palpable and harsher forms.

How I wished for a clever Dutch pencil this morning, to hit off a group of cows that had ensconced themselves amidst a cluster of rocks which form the highest point of the Castel Moulet. There they stood; one in an attitude of meditation

broken up by curiosity; another looking sideways and sleepily through a gap; a third, full front, head and horns only visible, in an attitude of sturdy defiance; while one, poised goat-fashion on the point of a peak, with the sky behind it and looking twice its natural size, hung forward with a sort of suspended air, like the bull in the zodiac.

There are charming things visible from Castel Moulet, and valleys to get at it without hut, or field, or tree, or other stream than the thread of water which at this dry season glistens through the narrow bottom like the track of the gossamer, but interesting from their graceful lines, the dark and tufted verdure which covers their sweeping sides and their poetic loneliness; of more power over the imagination than the autumnal bustle of those teeming glens that hang out pictures of social life and full-fed comfort. To-day there was not a bee abroad: even the small sharp file of the grasshopper was silent,—silent as nature "before the winds were made." There is something inexpressibly touching in this perfect stillness; nothing that gabbles in the sunshine has such sweet and thoughtful talk in it, nothing that carols in the air so full a flow of harmony.

All on a sudden, it was broken by the sound of a rustic pipe stealing up from the thickets below. I did not see the player, but the tone, whether breathed by faun or shepherd, was sweet and sleepy: it had the drowsy stillness of a summer noon in it. Descending from Castel Moulet by another path, we found ourselves again in a solitary valley just as the lengthened shadows fell on the hollows of the mountains: the sky was splendid, the hill-tops flooded with golden light, yet there was a solemnity in the silence; the shut-in quiet, the unbreathing atmosphere that subdued its radiance,—even nature seemed to pause and meditate.

A beautiful hill slides in obliquely, closing up the chain of wild valleys, and seeming to form a link between them and the world. Velvet lawns of the true meadow green are dotted over with cottages, each enclosed within its bower of foliage, and sheltered by a spreading wood which our guide called 'le bois de Madame de Grammont.'

The Grammonts are bound up with the history of the Pyrenees; their root-tree is in Navarre, and in the not unfrequent periods of internal contention, their name was often a war-cry, their banner a rallying point. Yet the sound seemed unsuit-

able to the scene; it was like the rustle of a birth-night train, and one almost expected to see a spread petticoat of white damask gliding through the branches; one delicate hand (made more delicate by the falling ruffle) hanging carelessly over the easy swell of the well-managed hoop, the other intercepting the sun by the green-and-gold intervention of a fan of peacock's feathers. A charming vision for the bowers of Chantilly, or the royal alleys of Fontainbleau; but too musked and ambered for the nature-made Pyrenees, where the shade of a gentle chatelaine may sometimes, perhaps, hawk in the grey day-break, before the warm sun has exhaled herself, her greyhound, and her falcon into vapour; or the phantom of a veiled Countess of Bigorre bewail her lord's cruelty through the barred windows of her prison-tower; but as for Grammonts—the feodal are fused into the courtly; and who could now repeat, even to himself, the mere name of Madame de Grammont, or Mademoiselle de Grammont, or the Count de Grammont, without finding his imagination overwhelmed by the splendour, grace, beauty, gallantry, high-breeding, and cool valour of Louis the Fourteenth's court. 'Le bois de Madame de

Grammont' has no iron-bound associations,—its sound is as modern as 'l'Allée de Maintenon.'*

At this wood the valley of Scrisse opened before us, gently developing its fresh and simple beauty. Some of the lateral glens that diverge from the queen valley of Campan, (Lesponne, for instance,) are almost as lovely as itself, and much more romantic, more apart and untrodden, and more within reach of the eye which delights to enter into the sweet details of herb and flower. Scrisse is, like many others, full of delicious pencilling; perhaps the carriage-road through the Arcadia of Campan may hurt the picture a little, while facilitating the access.

The cottages of Scrisse are literally cradled in wood, sometimes planted all round, and so close to the house, that at a little distance it looks as if it could be lifted up, trees and all, like a basket of flowers. At others, a row of spreading oaks, beech, or walnut, draws its verdant line across the sunny side of the dwelling, and extends the thick shade of its branches over the thatched roof. Nothing can be more beautiful than these bouquets of fresh verdure, disposed over the gradually rounded sides of the hills, or more pleasant than

* A favourite walk, a short distance from Bagnères.

the cabins that make one think of the sweet homely curds and-cream ballads of our old English song-writers, who beyond all others knew how to give the charm of simple life—its rustic pleasantness and gentle joy—to their pictures, without making them insipid ones. But what writers they were,—those hearty lovers of country pastimes and concerns! even he

> "who rode sublime
> Upon the seraph wing of ecstasy,"

descended to the natural earth, and subduing his glorious imaginings to the humbler level of rural life, talked lovingly of mowers and milkmaids; and after having painted paradise, and unveiled the pomp of heaven, sang to us in sweet rhymes sown with daisies, and all fragrant with the odour of the hawthorn-flower. Pitied some infant heads and some old ones, that passed us bending under a weight of logs, enough to tire a stout donkey. But the wood costs nothing except the trouble of carrying it, which softens matters prodigiously.

"Si j'avais les moyens," as the French say, I should like to do justice to the scenery round Bagnères dè Bigorre, whose soft and placid aspect is far from announcing the world of romance and

loveliness enclosed within its near mountains, and of which many—even of those who have remained long in its neighbourhood, are not aware. How often have people said to me, "O, as to Bagnères, it is not worth looking at; it is only a town like a hundred other little towns,—quite an every-day thing?"

"And the country about it?"

"Very agreeable, but nothing more."

And yet it would be difficult to find—difficult almost to fancy, scenes of prouder beauty or more engaging sweetness, than those which bury themselves between its hills, or charm the eye from their airy summits.

The valley of Trébons (or Oussouet,) has however (I believe) some celebrity as a pic-nic station: I think we have heard so, though it looks as if its solitude had never been profaned by vulgar revelry. I shall say nothing of the lonesome ways by which we passed to get at it, or of the deep glades with a bright light at their windowed end, letting in the distance like a warm cloud; or of the narrow glens with the dark stream rolling through them, like the scenes of Highland story; or yet of the slate-quarries with their deserted look-

ing sheds, of which a solitary child seemed to be sole guardian. As we approached she glided out from one of them, and sitting down on the fern, imbedded herself in it so completely that nothing but her face was visible, and that was half covered with long straight hair; so that one might have fancied her a cast-away mermaid, deposited like an oyster-shell on the top of a mountain by some forgotten deluge. But she was only a poor lonely thing, who had been left to take charge of the hut in the desert, and who had crept out to listen to perhaps the first human sounds which had come that way since the beginning of her solitary stewardship.

From these silent scenes we descended amidst mountains, whose broad green sides were sprinkled over, like the valley of Scrisse, with cheerful cabins encaged in trees, upon the amphitheatre that forms the head of the valley, and of which Mont Aigu is the outward rampart; and there we found a spot of sylvan sweetness shut out from the world, and within its hollow other mountains and other rocks, magically put together. One, detached from the rest, looked like the tomb of the patriarchs,—the tomb of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, in the field of Machphelah, " which is before

Mamré;" and while I gazed on it, the mourning of the thrashing-floor of Atad, the Abelmizraim, was before me; I saw it with the eyes of my heart. Two who were with us had visited this spot before, and having looked on it, lighted up by a bright sun, which in the close mountain depths is never a glaring one, thought it cold by comparison; but I missed nothing. There was a ray resting obliquely on the tomb of the shepherd kings,—a gleam of silvery light, and shadows that came and went: my eyes filled with tears as I looked at them.

When I feel the effects which such scenes, such lights,—such moments,—snatched from the world, produce upon my mind, I often wonder that those who are habitually under their influence, are not habitually virtuous. Necessity, temptation, and facility,—the triple Hecate of sin, would (one should suppose) be far less urgent, less seductive, in the country where wants are proportionably few, and excitements still fewer, than in a mighty capital. Yet we have it from unquestionable authority,—I do not quote the name, but the fact is well known,—that however great crimes may be the growth of the capital and the consequence of its disorders, yet the willing

instruments of their commission are most readily found in the country. Paris, that teeming capital, projects, but cannot always find hands to execute, and is compelled to seek for them in the distant provinces when any thing especially dreadful is to be done.

Why should this be? The inquiry might be curious and interesting to one skilled in moral metaphysics, and accustomed to trace back effects to causes; but to one who, like myself, sees in the works of nature the symbol of divine bounty, who feels deeply the moral and religious influence exercised over the mind by their familiar, their heart-bettering presence, it is the riddle of the Sphinx.

Hard labour in a field surrounded by natural and cheerful images, and hard labour in a noxious alley amidst sounds and sights of wretchedness, ought, one should think, to affect the mind very differently. It may be, that in great towns the bad grow effeminate, and that while the propensity to crime and cruelty is sharpened by excitement, the spirit of wicked daring becomes enfeebled by vicious indulgence. But why it should ripen into the readiness of action in the occupied (I do not say the idle) quiet of the country, remains a problem.

We returned through the valley of Trébons, going downwards from its head for about two leagues, (I think our men said,) until we came to the village of the same name on the road from Bagnères to Tarbes. But long before we reached it, the scene had changed; and the high realities and romantic illusions of the mountain regions, faded gradually, through continuous degrees of sweetness, into plain cabbage-garden prose. On our way we stopped at a Métairie, in the heart of some very fresh meadows, where we borrowed a table and set out our stores under the shade of some pleasant trees; the people of the farm furnished us with milk and butter, an omlette au lard, and a paste of maize, neatly served in small bowls, but not so good, we thought, as it looked.

The flour of maize, or of the blé sarrasin, (buck wheat,) constitutes (with the exception of the garbure already mentioned)* the chief food of the peasant throughout the Pyrenees. Sometimes a soup is made of it, mixed with coarse bread; at others, it is boiled to the consistency of paste, and seasoned with milk, a little butter, or merely salt: when fried it becomes a luxury, and *gourmets*

* Vide vol. i., p. 218.

have been known to sanction its pretensions. My chairmen of Gavarnie, I remember, discussed the claims of their country dishes very amusingly; the pâte of maize was excellent with milk, they said, better much than the pâte de sarrasin; but the last, with butter, was a royal feast!

"Viva il maccaroni!" exclaims the brawny fisherman of Naples, as he hoists two or three yards of that staff of life into the air, and lets it drop between his capacious jaws, unseasoned by any thing but the water it was boiled in; the Highland shepherd lauds his oatmeal cake, and smoking porridge; the English cotter, his beans and bacon; the Irish kern, his potatoe and spalspeen.* Be it maccaroni or maize, thin soup or solid pudding, the national dish is always the favourite one with the people, and sometimes continues so after circumstances have increased the means of indulgence. Rousseau had seldom any appetite at the luxurious table of the Maréchal de Luxembourg; but if, in passing through a hamlet, the odour of some savoury mess chanced to salute his nostrils, he instantly found one.

All which goes to prove that Nature is a hardy nurse, and would (if Circumstance, whom we often

* Salt herring.

take for her, did not step in and whip away her bantlings,) make the commerce of the East, and the commerce of the West, of small consequence. Which (to show that all is rightly arranged) would be an incommensurable loss to purses and palates; worse than a hurricane to the Spice Islands, and a death-blow to the turtle and the tea trade.

But however light the diet of the people here may be, they thrive most admirably upon it. It would be difficult to see a finer peasantry than we have every day before us. The children are hale and blooming, often handsome. A little girl brought me just now a nosegay, a faint one, but classical; pale violets, anemonies, the fragrant fennel, and the blue flower of the rosemary. Virgil might have put it together, but the child herself was the real flower; not a beauty, but with a soft transparency of colouring, a rich yet pure bloom, that might have well become the freshest rose or most delicate peach blossom. The women in the environs of Bagnères are tall, well made, and in general handsome; we seldom return from our country excursions without seeing a face worth looking at,—some peasant girl walking slowly along the road, with her distaff stuck in her side, drawing out her thread with a graceful play of the

arm, and concealing more beauty under the shade of her scarlet capulet than is usually found enclosed within the modish curve of a fashionable bonnet. The capulet, folded and laid flat upon the head, so as to advance from the face in the Italian way, and throw a shade upon the upper part of it, is extremely pretty and becoming; it is the general head-dress of the country girls about Bagnères, when the sun is hot enough to be annoying. Elderly persons are fond of the long white capuchons, which they wrap about them as the Arab of the desert does his blanket, and when tanned and savage, as often happens, are perfect Bedouins; quite fit to sit, with their legs under them, on the same bench with the prince bishop, (as the showman called him,) who with his two friends, also children of the wilderness, were exhibited at the last fair of St. Cloud. I shall never forget how they twinkled their animal eyes, looking all the time as if they would have mightily liked to have dined upon the curious, who were popping into their tents to see how the wild horsemen looked,—the Malek Adels of the desert; those incarnations of love and heroism, whom we have so long admired in romance.

I have talked so much of other people's dinners, that I have forgotten our own—our dinner on the grass, and our country appetites.* I looked into the cottage to see how the people lived, of whose abundance we had partaken. Nothing could be more comfortless; the clay floors damp and in holes, the light excluded; no attempt at order or cleanliness, though space enough for both. In better dwellings, in spacious farm-houses, I have sometimes remarked the same advantages of light and room rendered useless by the same inattention to comfort and appropriation; but the beds are in general good, and the provision of linen often abundant.

What with stopping to dine and loitering to admire, we delayed so long that it was dark before we arrived at Bagnères which we had quitted at nine o'clock. A long day for the chairmen; but they made nothing of it, and trotted home as briskly as they had trotted out. These chairmen are inconceivable people, always fleet, steady, and, if

* A distinguished critic and most delightful writer, whose words are born of thought and clothed in beauty, accused me once of a silver-fork tendency. I wish he could have seen how we pewtered it; it would have done his heart good.

civilly treated, good-humoured; there is no precipitous path, no goats' track, where they will not take you; over the Tourmalet to Barèges, by the mountains to Bagnères de Luchon, into Arragon, Catalonia,—where you will. My habitual porters want to carry me to Toulouse, and would, I have no doubt, go on with me to Nice, if I wished it.

Yesterday we mounted up to the cabins of Ordensède, a serious tug, with a very repaying moment at the end of it. The shepherds' huts, from which the spot is named, are now deserted; but from the heights above them, the whole valley of Campan unfolds itself like a map beneath the feet, developing its Arcadian character, its lateral valleys darkened by wood or lighted by sunbeams, which form the vestibules of the high mountains, and terminate in their deep recesses; the perfection of form that distinguishes its waving hills, the velvet covering drawn by a hand more delicate than that of art, over their rounded sides (never were there such hill-sides), and its extraordinary population. I had been accustomed to consider this valley as a popular superstition of the Pyrenees, believed in without inquiry; but I had only seen the straight road that runs through the

middle of it, and had no idea of the beauty which the eye takes in as, looking down, it sweeps along the valley from the opening to the close, and far beyond it, into the valley of Arrau, and the avenue of the Tourmalet. Towards Grip it is perhaps too thickly peopled for the still character of the scene; the cabins are clustered together like the temporary sheds of an Arab encampment, and the absence of trees about many of those dwellings in a country where every habitation is imparadised within its bower, gives them an unpermanent tent-like look, which strengthens the illusion. But altogether it is (as seen from this point) eminently beautiful, and, in a soft velvet way of its own, as original as lovely.

A steep road from the cabins, encumbered with loose stones and crumbling earth; besides being full of sharp corners, turning short on the edge of something very like a precipice; so that it is not a positive pastime to descend on horseback, though it may be done, for some of our party made the experiment; but not agreeably, or perhaps always safely. Next year it is to be smoothed, widened, rounded out of its angles, and made a beautiful bit of road, my chief chairman and principal resource

in the talking-line says; and then those who find it rolled out and softened, will of course praise it accordingly.

Had a meal of bread and most delicious milk served to us by the antique cowslip of a farm-house in the village of Sainte Marie; a good-humoured woman, who chucked me under the chin as if I was her gossip. Admired the neatness of the house, which might be cited as an example of that kind of comfort in which the rustic dwellings of the Pyrenees are often deficient; admired, too, the pleasant look round from the garden, and the wooded opening of a wild valley, of which the evening sun was making something marvellously sweet. The woman echoed our praises loudly,—"Monsieur le sous préfet et ces dames," had been the week before to see it;—could its beauty be doubted? Not, certainly, by our cowslip; who, though somewhat tea-coloured, deserved for her hearty good-humour and country courtesy to die, like Sir Thomas Overbury's milkmaid, in spring, "and have good store of flowers stuck round her winding-sheet."

CHAPTER X.

LIFE AND DEATH HOW NEAR EACH OTHER!—A MELANCHOLY CATASTROPHE—THE TRUE WIFE.

IT is not alone the solemn aspect of nature in a country of lakes and mountains that engenders melancholy, but also the feeling of its dangers. Novelty may make romance of them, and inexperience call them shadows; but their reality is often brought suddenly home to the startled mind by some legend of domestic grief, some recent and real sorrow, some living heart mourning for the dead one. For the chances of life, every where frail, are there hourly lessened by the hazards to which torrents, precipices, the treacherous path, the lake navigated in ignorance, perpetually expose it; we stand in the shadow of death, even while a thrill of delight runs through our veins; and many, who look up with happy eyes to the sky and bless its beauty, may never again behold it brightening on the home of their hearts.

A mournful story has just reached us,—a melancholy comment on this page of danger. Two young persons,* strangers from England and only married a month, set out from Cauteretz to pass a lonely, pleasant day amidst the mountains. Arrived at the Lac de Gaube, the gentleman expressed a wish to row a little on it; but the old fisherman, who had piloted the boat for more than forty years, had died a day or two before, and there was no one to supply his place. It is said that the lady feared to venture out in so frail a skiff, unless accompanied by some one accustomed to the lake, and tried to dissuade her husband from going; but not being able to prevail, went with him. Soon after, screams were heard, and those on shore saw her standing up alone in the boat, the image of despair; a moment after there was a plash,—and the next she was seen floating! For a little while her clothes sustained her, but the chairmen, who had brought her over the mountains and were the sole witnesses of this appalling scene, did not know how to swim, and there was no attempt made to save her life.

It appears, that this horrible catastrophe could

* Mr. and Mrs. Patteson.

not have been seen distinctly from the shore, for no one can tell exactly how it happened. As the boat was not overset, it is imagined that the ill-fated husband may have dropped his oar into the water, and stooping to recover it, have overreached himself, or been thrown out by its sudden inclination to one side; and that his wretched wife, finding that her cries brought no assistance, had plunged in after him in an agony of despair. Poor devoted creature! hers was doubtless a gay heart, —perhaps a timid one; but woman's love is the heroism of passion. She, weak trembling being, frightened at a scratch, startled by the sighing of the wind, is the true soldier of the forlorn hope,— bound even to death.

I have seldom heard a sadder tale of love blighted in its blowing; of hearts, but a moment before so full of present and projected happiness, so quickly and frightfully stilled. There was no billowy swell, such as sometimes ruffles the face of the deep lake, not a breath of wind, not a cloud across the sun; calmness was in the heavens and on the earth. Two embarked gaily; two were together; and then there was only one,—and she with death in her cry, and none to save her!

But O the bright and beautiful ray of love that gilds this dismal story! the true heart, the brave and tender one,—that, failing to save, would follow the husband of its love!

Death his pall drew over her,
Flow'rs were none to cover her;
Never sorrow, never tear,
Did embalm her hasty bier.
Twice baptised was the bride;
Married twice,—twice side by side,
At the altar, 'neath the wave,
Bound by vow, and bound by grave.
Nothing shall dissever them,
Nothing rive their double stem.
They are linked for aye together
In the everlasting tether.
Holy bride,—devoted one,
Well thy double crown was won!
Crown of martyr, crown of love,
Death below, and joy above!

It is now five days since this sad event took place, and only one of the bodies has been found—that of the poor lady. It was recovered a short time after the extinction of life, and borne back to Cauteretz over the same mountain-path which she had traversed but a few hours before, in that affluence of hope whose future has no limit.*

* A monumental stone has since been erected to the memory of this ill-fated pair, on the border of the lake.

CHAPTER XI.

DEPARTURE FROM BAGNERES DE BIGORRE—MY ALPUXXARAS — CONVENT OF ESCALADIEU — MAUVOIZE — MOONLIGHT WATCHING—A STORM—THE BEAUTY OF BETRIN—A VILLAGE INN—BERGHEM SCENERY—BAGNERES DE LUCHON—VALLEY DE LYS—ITS BOAZ AND ITS RUTH—FLOWERS—SHEEP AND GOATS—A MOUNTAIN TOWN—THE MOTHER'S SMILE—UNEDUCATED CRITICISM.

October 2nd. I think I should have been sorry to have quitted Bagnères, whose sweet accessible country has greatly delighted me,—sorry, I mean, on its own account,—had not a nearer concern, a more home regret, effaced the weaker feeling. Perhaps we should be too happy, if we were always surrounded by those we love. If there was no chasm through which regret could enter, — no separation, no absence,—how should we resign ourselves to die!

After having clambered up all the accredited heights in the neighbourhood of Bagnères, the Pic

du Midi excepted, which though not, I believe, of very difficult access, is still beyond the reach of my puny capabilities, we have bid it adieu. In the morning the sun shone out fitfully, but the distant clouds were heavy; so was my heart, and I almost thanked that bright sun when it hid its glory: it seemed then as if the aspect of nature shaped itself to my feelings, soothing them with mute, but most expressive sympathy.

But the sky brightened as we advanced, and our farewell-look back at Bagnères and its surroundings from the ascent of the Toulouse road, left a beautiful impression on my mind, and yet a sad one. I thought of that point of the Alpuxxaras from which Boabdil looked his last on Granada; that point which the Spaniards call "el ultimo suspiro del Moro;" and gave a sigh too, and a very deep one, though not for

"Thrones, dominations, princedoms, powers,"

but for something dearer to me than all put together. O, the leaving behind is a sad thing! and the being left behind is, they say, still sadder. I, too, used to think so, but this morning it seemed to me otherwise.

Still the sun grew brighter; and while the Pic

du Midi, and all the higher summits were tipped with snow, the green mountains of the second tier warmed themselves in its beams. Scarcely a yellow leaf to be seen: if it were not for the maize, which is fast approaching the spoonbill state, and hangs out the colours of autumn in its ragged streamers, one might fancy it July. I could not look at the Pic du Midi without something like regret at not having mounted up to it. Those who have achieved the Maladetta, or the Mont Perdu,—so long the north-west passage of the Pyrenees, but at length conquered,—treat the Pic du Midi as a garden walk, or at least a lady's mountain; but admit the views which it commands to be among the very finest.

From Bagnères to the old monastery of Escaladieu, (now *campagne* and post-house,) we had soft vales and woody screens drawn out behind each other, and bushy hollows with a fine wave-like border of mountains. Escaladieu has lost its monastic character, at least exteriorly, but the oak-forest in which it seems buried, is good; and so is the castle of Mauvoizé, (or Mauvezin,) cresting a detached hill and looking upon it proudly. The convent has had its

miracles, and the castle its siege. When the Duc d'Anjou, more fortunate than he was afterwards at Lourdes, attacked and became master of it in 1347, the governor, Raymonet de L'Epée (who held it in trust for the English) did his duty bravely; yielding at last, not to the arms of the enemy, but to the want of water. Hunger and thirst are worse adversaries than cannon balls: "A cup of water, and I will fight the day down."

The old connexion between the convent and the castle has now no general existence, except in ruins; but whenever I see its traces, I find a meaning in them that sets one thinking of the moody stories of old long ago; and if I was not afraid of encountering something more material than the spirits of the desert, I should have no objection to "out-watch the Bear," from cloister or from tower, on some fair still night when the stars were out, provided that I could put my head through hole or casement, and have the air, and the sky, and the passing clouds for company. I do not love charnel-house gloom, nor the shut-up and remote gallery of an untenanted and lonely house at midnight; nor am I sure of the effect which (though not naturally fearful) such things might have

upon my imagination. But leaning from my casement, above the dangers of earth, and with the pale moon and watching stars over my head, I think I should feel as if angels were about me, and listen to the low chaunt or swelling chorus of the dead and buried monks, as to something too high and holy to inspire the earthly feeling of superstitious dread.

As we journeyed on, leaving Escaladieu behind us, we were struck by a prodigious effect of light, or rather darkness; the vast hollow that lay beneath us at one side, was entirely overhung and encircled by a sable curtain of thick clouds, that left only a narrow selvage of light visible beneath its heavy rim. The woods within the circle seemed to blacken under the eye; while, standing out from their gloomy and portentous back-ground, was the tower of Mauvoizé, with a wild bright gleam on it that rayed out from under the heavy curtain. At a distance, a field strewed thickly over with layers of dry fern, had been set on fire, and blazed like a volcano in full activity, crackling, throwing up volumes of smoke, and darkening the sky luridly.

At length the storm burst, and down came a

deluge, blotting out every thing. No silver selvage or rayed light, nothing but huge spongy clouds that seemed to rain mud; then, as these dirty wool packs cleared off, a gipsy country showed itself; rough dingles, heathy commons, and oak woods. Two women, riding against the rain, both astride on one horse and enveloped from head to foot in their long capuchons, would have startled the illustrious Husseim* himself. Another, similarly hooded, but the mantle black and drawn across the face, so as just to leave the eyes visible, strode beside them: all admirable desert furniture. Rain at Montrejau, and the first for six months; so the good folks were blessing the clouds, and standing about their doors as if it were a luxury to be soaked through. After Montrejau, some pleasant cottages, with chestnut groves, fig trees, and vines hanging their convolved garlands from branch to branch. Herds of swine roaming about the woods, and wallowing in the acorns: swine are a favourite stock in the Pyrenees, and not only in the woods, but in the towns too, where they sometimes run about the streets as dogs do at Constantinople.

Rain, hills, and post-boys so delayed us, that

* The Dey of Algiers.

we were obliged to sleep at Betrin, a hamlet with a farm-house inn of rather an untempting exterior. The daughter of the house is a beauty of high repute; to me she appeared rather a sooty and very slatternly concern, but with a Greek style of head that might become the two long tresses, or small embroidered fési cap; a strait outline, large black eyes, languid but not languishing,—dull perhaps is the better word; inky lashes and hair, but an unfurnished countenance—a blank and hollow one, without mind, grace, freshness, or, that I could see, teeth. Few stop here that can help it, and yet there are worse places. A village inn is always, to my fancy, preferable to a town one, unless it be very bad indeed; many would call this so, but for myself I like to hear the cocks crow, and to see the pigeons flying about from roof to window, and the oxen unyoking, and the grave duck waddling at the head of her progeny into the puddle; and greatly prefer the blacksmith's shed with an old tree against it, or the scattered timber and country air of a wheelwright's yard, hedged round with hawthorn, a large elder bush in one corner and a weigh-beam with an idle urchin at each end of it in another, to the close street and

the opposite neighbour. Here our opposite neighbour is a wooded hill, on which the rain (now over) has left an iris, that spans the dewy boughs with as bright an arch as if it had been flung over the spray of a cataract.

Wednesday. A beautiful sparkling day after a wet night, but hot; and the moisture exhaled by the sun, rolling off from the flanks of the mountains like smoke from the pores of a volcano. Valleys ground in somewhat raggedly, but with fine bits, and an amazing colouring in the near mountains,—a rich priming of moss and heath, all velvet browns or soft purple, and the golden glow of the fern, now a deep orange, brightening over it; while the lingering verdure of the oak still gives a summer air to the sheltered hollows. But generally speaking, the leaves are at least a fortnight more autumnal here than at Bagnères de Bigorre.

Some soft changes of scenery, though a little spoiled by the barbarous peeling of the trees. The lovers of Berghem, and other painters of the same school, may often meet his scenes in the Pyrenees. A plain enclosed by mountains, and traversed by a river; a flock of sheep, a herd of cattle,—the shepherd balanced on his sauntering mule, the woman

sideways on her sleepy horse; barking dogs or watchful ones, a fine tree or a lopped one, and a painter's atmosphere. As we approach Bagnères de Luchon, the sky thickens,—dirty-water clouds, sulky, not grand; the wooded mountains fine, and the tinting magnificent. But the landscape wants lighting up, and while it begs with a damp wintry face for a ray or two, the ill-humoured sun hides himself from us; and after all the bright morning promises, draws the curtain of his tent, and plays the invisible just as we want his good offices.

Thursday—Bagnères de Luchon. A brilliant morning has put us all in good humour, and we discover that the avenue of lime trees, (Versailles has nothing more royal,) which separates the town from the baths, must in summer be not only a beautiful thing to look upon, but also a most luxurious shelter from the fervours of the *canicule*, compared with which our dog-star may be allowed to call itself by the moist name of dew-lap. At each side of this avenue are detached houses, some large and good looking, which are usually inhabited during the season by summer visitors. It is the fashionable promenade; but equipages, cavaliers, and ladies, have returned to gladden the provincial

capitals; and the gay mall is changed to a winter walk, with bare trees and an undulating carpet of yellow leaves.

However, we found green ones again in the valley de Lys. In getting to it, we passed the ruins of Castel Vieilh, cresting the summit of an isolated rock at the opening of the gorge that leads to the Spanish valley of Aran. Similar towers are frequent in the Pyrenees, and many are believed (perhaps ascertained) to be of English origin, and to date from the time when the chances of war, or alliance, gave the English a temporary possession in this country.

Nothing can be more lovely than the beech woods at this moment: such a fusion of tints, the bright green leaf arriving at the red one through so many intermediate hues, almost like the blending colours of the rainbow. We turned to the right from the valley de Luchon, and passed through a wooded defile, half in shade and half in splendour, with a clear rough stream brawling through it; over which some old trees extended their knotted arms, forming a bower above the water, through which the eye scarcely penetrated. To this wild glen the valley de Lys links itself

placidly, mildly preluding the beauty of its higher scenes. As we passed along over broad fields pastured by herds of cattle, we inquired if it were possible to procure milk; a ragged cowherd, who was lying at full length among the daisies, sprang up and was off, at a word from our guide, to a grange at a little distance. He soon returned with a bowl of delicious cream,—real cream, fresh as the first strawberries. When we had all partaken of it, we inquired whom we were to pay. "Ce monsieur," replied our guide, pointing to the tattered Boaz of the daisies, who stood balancing the empty bowl between his fingers, and proved to be lord of both kine and land. In the happy valleys of the Pyrenees all are proprietors, be it only of a garden or a field; and every man may eat of the fruit of his own vine, or 'drink of the waters of his own cistern,' if the bubbling and abundant springs did not render the preserved waters, which image so strongly the drought of the desert, unnecessary.

There is great beauty, both of form and colouring, in the woody theatre that terminates the valley, and a cascade, of not much note as a fall, but in a lovely shell: and then another not far from it, and

more copious and sparkling, gleaming through the dark trees like a shooting star; and some clustering peaks peering over the deep area, with a little snow and a flood of sunshine on them. Large pastures covered with herds feeding peacefully or ruminating in the clear stream, form the carpet of the valley, and numerous granges are scattered over its gentle swells. As we passed the door of one, a very handsome girl opened it, and looked out: the Ruth certainly eclipsed the Boaz.

In these intermediate valleys, that lie between the high pastures and the warmer regions of the lower lands, is the summer dwelling of the farmer. Here he lives with his family, sowing and reaping, irrigating his meadows, cutting his grass, and housing his winter store of food and forage, until the increasing severity of the weather sends him down to his village shelter, his winter gossip and warm corner; when he leaves his grange to be occupied by his shepherd, who, descending from the solitude of the mountains to the still deeper solitude of the valley, exchanges the summer sun and the blue sky for the overwhelming snow and the long and lonely nights of the dark season. And stabling

himself and his flocks under the same roof, waits with a patient and edifying endurance of the season's vigour, of utter loneliness and extreme privation, until the sun comes again in its beauty and calls him up to the thymy pastures, where he once more enjoys the sober liberty of the broad heath, and the sweet neighbourhood of the summer sky.

The turf in this sequestered valley is no longer enamelled with the flower from which it derives its balmy name. But in summer, if report be true, that bank of "ox-lip and the nodding violet," which it is incense to think of, was not more thickly set with sweets, more lavishly embroidered, than are these dappled fields, that wear their scented garniture—one cannot say, as of some others, only for the stars and the shepherds, but for *le ravissant pique-nique*, with its delightful opportunities and happy chances; when a gay party trot down the anemonies, make amends for a hot ride by a cold dinner, and flirt their way back again by moon-light, or star-light, or no light, if the skies should be mystical.

Sheep are a charming stock for lawns, and a convenient one for young beginners in the land-

scape line, who dot them off at a touch, and scatter them about like caraway-comfits; but for mountain scenery, there is nothing like the goat. How those horned philosophers become all wild and solitary places! There is a flock at this moment hanging almost in the air just over our heads, and looking as if their light weight would bring down the nicely poised masses of granite on which they seem suspended,—masses detached in gone-by time from the mountain to whose sides they still cling, sustained by the branching arms of the beech trees, which have grown up under them. A shaggy-bearded Tityrus leads the van; his aged eyes look down upon us with an expression of dulled displeasure; he even makes a slight movement with his horns, but habitual laziness gets the better of his wrath, and, after an instant of excitement, he returns to his habitual air of watchful gravity.

As we return homewards through the close valleys, the shadows of evening fall in broad sheets upon the wooded mountains,—wooded from the summit to the base. The effect of this dark sweep of foliage, is fine and powerful; coming darkness is always powerful, the mind builds for

it a tabernacle, where thought and fancy worship; there is a spirit of melancholy in it that stirs the soul, a sweet contagion that spreads itself silently like the night clouds, whose quiet progress veils the face of heaven, and while they steal upon it, give to the evening aspect of these wild glens a touching and almost supernatural character.

How such scenes throw back the world—the present world! How they open the sources of thought, and renew that meditative faculty which (strange though it may seem) belongs to the earlier stages of youth, but quits us when reflection becomes calulation, as it so often does in after life!

I speak of meditation awakened by natural objects. When existence is new, it is not ripened thought that reflects, it is not experience that deduces, it is the soul that, with its instinct of beauty freshly awakened, casts itself upon the expanse of life; and having time, space, hope, before it, all ills unknown, all promises untried, pauses on the spot it loves, fondly allying its beauty with the brightly imaged but unknown future, which spreads itself out in the distance.

Leisure, the friend of thought, seems then inexhaustible, and the soul, wrapped in the beautiful tissue of hope, lingers within its folds as if it feared that, in disengaging itself, it should break the threads of so fair a texture; and thus dreams on, till a sudden jerk pushes it into the briery paths of this every-day world.

When, in after years, we look about from the ground to which we then looked forward, we do not meditate,—we scarcely pause. Hopes (I mean earthly ones) have changed into retrospections: they are not extinguished, for we feel them tenderly awakened for our children, and for those who are dear to us, but with the drawback of experience on them. The feelings of a loving heart can never *at any moment* be altogether individual; and as the chances of life grow less, and those cares which we feel for others become closer and more clinging, the actual supplants the ideal; thought no longer creates, it only recalls; and that luxury of meditation, whose very melancholy is full of vague hopes and thronging fancies, in which the *to come* stirs like an unseen spirit of good, gives way to sobered, or more anxious influences.

Yet the aspect of nature never wholly loses its power over minds that have once felt its charm; and there are still moments when, renewing dear acquaintanceship with its once familiar loveliness, we feel its inspirations ruling us again as in the May of life; moments when the love of action, or the habit of it, lapses into the love of musing by which it was originally produced; when thought again becomes poetry, not written in the rays of the morning sun, but traced in the still delicious colours which are left behind at its setting. At evening, and in these deep valleys, the meditative spirit which used to dwell with me in my early youth often visits me again, and we still walk abroad linked hand-in-hand together.

This is a downright mountain town; the news of the morning is, that a bear has been shot a few fields off, while he was supping on Turkish wheat, little thinking of a bullet in the thorax. At every moment the tinkling of bells announces the return of the flocks from the high pastures; a muffled shepherd, a huge dog, a hunter with an izard,

which he has just killed, flung across his shoulders, or a wood-cutter with his axe and wallet, are the principal figures; to which a file of rough mountain horses laden with wood, or a country cart drawn by oxen, serve as accessories. So far as dress may be taken as a criterion of comfort, the peasants of the valley of Luchon, seem not the most comfortable in the Pyrenees. I do not speak of the inhabitants of the town who fatten on lucky casualties; but of the country people, who are often poorly clad, and in personal negligence somewhat germane to their neighbours the Spaniards, who are perfect incrustations.

I was rather touched this morning by the expression of maternal tenderness with which a poor woman, who rode beside us as we jogged along the valley, gazed at her children and caressed them. One was a baby in arms, the other a little fellow of three years old, who clung to the saddle with surprising tenacity; the mother was a plain woman and slatternly, but I have never seen a sweeter smile than hers, when she held up the little one to be kissed by its brother. Such a fond heartfelt smile! it quite illumined her coarse features, and

made one think how secondary is the beauty of complexion, or even of symmetry, to the charm of expression; that sign of soul, and symbol of all those tender shades of character which are too fine and fugitive for the heavier developement of words.

The subject of beauty, or its elements, puts me in mind of the chambermaid's answer, when I asked her this morning what she thought of the beauty of Betrin: "Trop noire, mais il y a quelque chose de beau ici;" and she passed her hand across the middle of her forehead. I was struck with the delicacy of the criticism from so coarse a critic; but opinions, undirected by the finger-post of authorized rule, have often an instinct of taste, a feeling of what is, or what ought to be, not always within the power of education to confer. I recollect a country gossip, a hawker of cream-cheese, in Ireland, once talking to me of a girl who was her neighbour, and the beauty of the village; and after a long eulogium on her coal-black hair and apple cheek, adding, that she had no knobs on her knuckles.

Another example. I once knew a certain abi-

gail, who could neither read nor write, and never, I believe, was accused of having an idea of her own, or indeed of thoroughly comprehending one when presented to her by another: yet this person, when taken to the gallery of the Louvre, said, "I don't like the pictures of our Saviour: he is only like a good man, but not heavenly; nothing, as it were, of glory."

CHAPTER XII.

OPENING OF AN ATTACK UPON SPAIN—EXCURSION TO THE PORT DE VENASQUE — THE HOSPICE—DESERT SOUNDS—THE ASCENT—FIRST SIGHT OF ARRAGON—DISAPPOINTMENT—A VOW—EFFECTS OF CERTAIN SCENERY ON CERTAIN MINDS—THE BREACH IN THE WALL —THE MALADETTA AND ITS UNICORN—SMUGGLERS—THE COW HORN—A MONTH TOO LATE—AUTUMN IN THE HIGH VALLEYS AND IN THE LOW.

AFTER having talked, wished, hoped, and despaired, we have at length stood upon Spanish ground; not firmly however, for we were merely blown in and blown out again through an aperture in the mountains; and had but just time enough to niche ourselves close to the jut of a rock, and look round hastily. Indeed even this imperfect peep was not achieved without difficulty; and the loss of an hour in the morning, which we could not recover afterwards, half spoiled our excursion.

Instead of quitting Bagnères at six, as we ought to have done, we took the advice of our guide,

and did not set off till after the clock had struck seven. The road passes through the valley of Luchon, leaving Castel Vieilh to the left, and the turn to the valley de Lys to the right; the bristling summits of the Port de Venasque * were full in view, and though we could not see the breach, yet the mountains of clouds which the wind forced through it were most uncomfortably visible.

We ascended through a forest of beech, mixed up with other summer trees, a sprinkling of funereal pines, and a rich thickening of nut and elder, but no sign of habitation save the deserted hut of some charcoal-burners. As we advanced, the wind howled above our heads and made us fear for the success of our little enterprise. However, we jogged on to the Hospice,—a true Swiss house of refuge outwardly, but within, (as those who have seen both say) a legitimate Spanish posada. The ground-floor is divided into three parts, of which the kitchen forms the centre; a capacious chimney and a blazing fire gave it a look of something like comfort, to which it certainly had no other ground of pretension: for though tolerably clean, the walls

* The openings in the mountains (of which there are several) that communicate with Spain, are called Ports.

and roof were smoked into the same livery as the back of the chimney, and were literally as black as soot. A long table, with a permanent bench of equal length, occupied one side of the wall, and opposite to it were two windows, with no other defence than that of wooden shutters; so that in case of a storm, the choice lay between wind, rain, and utter darkness. An aperture in the wall let in a full view of the stables, and a step ladder placed against it afforded the means of a cheerful communication with the horses.

We wanted a halt of Spaniards to complete the picture, but had neither muleteer or contrabandista, silk net or slashed doublet, guitar or castanet; a short dirty cloth, probably almost as permanent as the bench, was spread over one end of the table, on which half a dozen bowls full of some white stuff prepared for the breakfast of the chairmen stood smoking; we waited till they had finished their meal, and then put ourselves in motion for the Port of Venasque. The mountain rises up immediately in front of the Hospice, and presents so steep a face, that the eye finds itself repelled from every point in which it seeks for a possible path; the summit, too, looked light and flaky, as if a

strong wind would uncap it, and there was every indication of a storm. As we ascended slowly, a track unfolded itself: I may literally say unfolded, for its short zig-zag often traced a pattern, as precisely designed as the embroidery of a petticoat. Following those repeated doublings, we gained ground on the mountains; sometimes skirting the edge of the precipice, sometimes by ways so steep, that those who were on horseback found themselves obliged to dismount, and leave their steeds to make it out as they could.

But there was no danger in our difficulties, except that which might have arisen from the accident of the wind; nothing sufficiently occupying to make us for a moment insensible to the might and power of the scene around us, or to the solemn and accordant movement of the eagle who wheeled slowly round, sometimes in ample, sometimes in diminished circles, over our heads; at one moment lowering his majestic flight as if welcoming us to his dreary domain, then soaring upwards and resting on the air, sustained and still, like a throned cloud to which fancy had given form. At intervals the sharp and monotonous whistle of the wild birds nestled in the rocks, broke the universal

silence. The melancholy cry of these birds is the true music of the desert; its sound, distinctly heard where no other sound disputes the ear, makes more impression than the noise of trumpets in the thronged street. They who placed the shrine in the wilderness had studied human nature, and well knew how sweet to the heart of man is the pilgrim worship that offers up its incense on the threshold of the heavens. Necessity and convenience draw men together to pray in crowded cities amidst the calling off of other cares; but on the high mountains, in the silent valley, the heart waits not for the stated time, the tolled hour, and lauds without knowing that its praise is prayer.

As we wound upwards, our guide pointed out to us a mountain, from whose surface all trace of vegetation had been effaced by fire. It was quite black in many parts: the shepherds had done it, he said. I asked if from malice or accident: from neither, he replied, "c'étoit par enfantillage." To what cheerless sports are the poor Lysanders of the barrier mountains reduced! Farther on, we passed the lonely grave of four Spaniards, who were surprised here by an avalanche, and perished in the desert; and higher up four melancholy lakes,

deep, and dark, and clear, lay linked together within the hollow of the mountains. The largest was just beneath our feet; a partial air passed over it, curling its surface languidly; the next was motionless,—each had a single rock, small and tomb-like, rising out of its bosom;' and on the third lay a pale steel-coloured gleam, that gave a cold metallic cast to its waters. These lakes added a still graver tint to the sombre colouring of the surrounding objects, as still water always does to scenery of a serious character.

We continued for some time to toil our way upwards, struggling against the wind that blew in our teeth, and threatened at every whisk to carry my chair over the edge of the precipice; indeed it was with considerable difficulty that four men, using all their strength, could hold it down. L——, who kept close to me, was seriously alarmed, dreading every moment to see his better half piped into eternity by those chubby, bellows-cheeked, head-and-fin varlets, who kept puffing at us from all points of the compass.

At length we came within sight of "the imminent deadly breach." Here the rocks are nearly vertical, so that, to compass an ascent, the path is made to

turn at every six or eight feet: had it not been for the strong barrier of stones, we should have found it impracticable in the teeth of such a blast. The wind roared through the chasm with a tremendous sound, like the rolling of the six hundred chariots of Pharaoh. My chairmen could hardly make head against it: several times we were driven back; but at length, by a desperate push, they succeeded in forcing their way through the portal, and thus made a forcible entrance into the kingdom of Arragon.

How rejoiced I was to find myself there! and then, after the first glance, how disappointed! yet I scarcely knew what I had expected: perhaps thirty degrees of Reaumur, sunny vales, citron groves, convent spires, towered cities in the distance, and spreading cork trees on the fore-ground. I cannot say, in short, what my visions may have been; but the reality was the austere and mighty Maladetta (worth, some might think, all that my inordinate fancy had put together) with its mantle of snow and its zone of glaciers; its lofty head veiled in clouds, and at its base a valley covered with thin herbage, with other valleys issuing from it; a scattering of dark pines, a limited horizon, and

bleak peaks, white as itself. The other side of the mountains, the Spanish *versant*, had always seemed to me to carry with it a summer sound,—a date-and-fig and lemon odour; but an aspect of nature so unexpected, startled me out of my southern visions.

"That day I *dreamt* no more,"

at least of the red almond, or the green lime, or yet of Dorothea with her pretty feet in the summer stream, or other fine weather fancies with which my head teemed.

But even the bare breath of Spain, icicled as it was, had its influence; and in that moment, —great resolutions being often engendered of casualties,—I made a vow (that is, a sort of a one) which, should I ever be so near to it again, I hope, to accomplish. It will not take me to the shrine of St. Jago de Compostela, but to the strong-hold of the Moors,—to the halls and fountains of the Alhambra, whose walls still seem to echo the bold counsels of Ayxa, the heroic mother of the feeble Boabdil, and the soft pleadings of Zorayma his tender wife; or mournfully to answer to the lament of the Moorish governor for the loss of his daughter, Fatima the Moresca. It will take

me too, this vow of mine, to the mountains of Ronda, where (as I once read in a charming little book) "the soldiers of the faith broke the right wing of the Mahometan vulture;" and to Malaga, were it only for the sake of the deep colouring which it receives from the remembrance of that night of woe to the Moors, when their wives and children were driven from the beautiful city of their birth, and sold, like the daughters of Jerusalem, into bondage. What a neighbourhood for thought! what recollections are these of high deeds and heavy sorrows!

But to return to my bit of Arragon. There were pastures, but neither herds nor shepherds; the solitude was profound, the storm loud, the clouds disturbed and moving rapidly; there were broad glares of cold sunshine,—not constant ones, and a look of stillness in the motionless mountains, and in the short unbending pines and close herbage, that contrasted strangely with the noise and hurry in the heavens. There are minds eager of emotion, minds worn out by the constant recurrence of the same impressions, that might find a renewing power in such a scene; but there are others who have also worn out life, or consumed

it in the languor of ennui, who too feel the necessity of strong excitement, but would shrink from seeking it in this stormy solitude. The reveries of Obermann, prolonged through seasons, years, a life, by the murmur of the rolling river, under the broad tree, or beside the warm hearth when the rain beats against the roof or the snow falls, might here darken into the dreamings of despair. Rousseau, whose most profound thoughts were often awakened by the simplest and most common-place images, might have felt the sensibility which a sprig of periwinkle could excite, chilled into despondence, or angered into desperation. While Manfred, in the cold and sterile regions of the Maladetta, in the mystery of its clouds and silence, would have recognised the occult nature, of whose dark secrets his grand and melancholy imaginings had shown him gleams; or Faust the wild world, where the spirits of the cursed hold shrieking revels.

In summer days, when the air is calm, the sky cloudless, and the pastures covered with flocks, this Spanish *versant* of the Pyrenees may wear a gentler and less imposing aspect. The peaks may lose their snow, the vale its silence, and even the

Maladetta a part of its terrors; but it is now a stormy hollow, austerely walled in and silent—but for the roaring of the wind—as the grave itself. We stood a few moments in mute homage before the desert giant, and then yielding to the extreme cold and extreme wind, suffered ourselves to be blown in again through the aperture.*

This running from one great kingdom to another through a gap in the division wall, was not the least striking part of our frontier transit. As the mountain portal is approached, the path ascends as if it were making straight up to the sky; a lofty barrier rises up before it, the traveller neither sees his way, nor comprehends where he is to find a further footing; when suddenly the mountain seems to open, a breach appears in the close neighbourhood of the sky, and the perpendicular rocks, which seemed defended by their form from the profanation of human footsteps, recede, as if a mighty voice had again spoken in the desert.

* Marca contradicts Strabo, who asserts that the Spanish *versant* of the Pyrenees was covered with wood, and always verdant, and the French side naked; while the contrary (he says) was the case.

To get from France into Italy, we may follow the windings of the Mediterranean shore without being apprised, by any sudden change of scenery or colouring, that we have passed from one country to another; or we may enter by a journey over the Alps, which prepares the mind by a gradual change of climate and of vegetation for all that is to follow. But here one runs in and out,—one moment in France, the next in Spain, just as one might through a breach in a garden wall, only the wall here is some feet thicker; and yet the barrier is a magnificent one, and the kingdoms as boldly separated by nature, as fear, prejudice, or policy could desire.

We greatly wished to have returned by the Port de la Picade, and the Catalonian valley of Aran. But the hour which we had lost in the morning was not to be found again; and we were obliged to come out as we had gone in, with only one slight, unsatisfying glance of that which had been so tricked and rainbowed in our fancies. Of the official impediments likely to be thrown in our way, we neither saw nor heard any thing; the door was open and we had only to go in, and might, I dare say, have walked on to Zaragoza,

taking with us the cholera, if we had happened to have its germ about us, without hindrance from carabineer, or other authority. These carabineers, who are the links of the *cordon sanitaire*, ought, as in duty bound, to have been posted at the Port, but were probably warming themselves at the nearest fire; to which neglect of orders we owed the facility with which we ran in, and ran out again.

Valleys have their legends, and mountains their mysteries; even the name of the Pyrenees, like that of many others, has its fabulous etymology.* The mystery of the Maladetta is the story of a strange animal with a single horn growing out of its forehead, and which, from being first cousin to the unicorn, if not the very beast itself, dropped down into a mere *bouquetin*,—otherwise, wild goat. When we had descended a little below the Port, and still hung over the four melancholy lakes, the warm plains of Toulouse appeared in the far distance, all radiant with sunshine. At first I doubted their being the downright plains of

* Pyrene, the daughter of Bebrycius, King of Iberia, betrayed and abandoned by Hercules, wandered into their savage recesses, and was there devoured by wild beasts; from hence the origin of the word Pyrenees.

Toulouse, which by the road is somewhere about eighty miles distant; but next door—our men said, as the crow flies, which assertion immediately convinced me (though I cannot exactly say how) of their identity. Farther down, a band of Spanish smugglers passed us on their way homewards, with a string of mules purchased in the valley of Arrau, which they projected slipping in duty free. I had always believed that the Spanish mule was the handsomest of the species; but it appears that great numbers are imported annually into Spain from the Pyrenees, and that a considerable traffic is carried on in this particular branch of commerce between the frontier valleys of each country.

As the carabineers have full power to fire at whoever they may catch attempting to pass into Spain at this time of cholera without having first performed quarantine; and as it seemed impossible that six men with thirty mules could hope to glide in on tiptoe, we inquired how these conscientious tradesmen meant to manage matters. Our guide replied, that being smugglers,—he had been one himself, he added proudly,—they were prepared to kill or be killed. The men were cer-

tainly six of the most pacific figures I ever beheld, and, in all likelihood, were prepared with two or three five-franc pieces,—a species of propitiation rarely rejected by the gentlemen who administer justice on the frontiers.

We arrived, chilled with cold, at the Hospice; where, finding snug seats in the chimney, we warmed ourselves thoroughly; and then proceeded to Bagnères. The storm had subsided, and the calm of the forest, the coming twilight, and the still grey sky, were soothing after the bluster of the Venasque; yet there was something almost solemn in the contrast. It was like the quiet evening of a boisterous life; the tumult is over, we enjoy our repose, but we enjoy it pensively; the susceptibility of livelier emotion has passed away with the occasions which called it forth.

As we descended into the valley of Luchon, we heard the swell of the Alp-horn in the meadows; it was a tuneless one, the old Egyptian flute—the cow-horn, but without the holes; pleasant, however, if only for its memory of Switzerland. Our guide (an old man) talked of this horn-blowing as a new accomplishment, and one for which he had no toleration; all the younkers did it, he said

contemptuously. This little burst of spleen was certainly out of season, for as yet the shepherds of the Pyrenees seem content to enjoy their beautiful country without setting their feelings to music, or even vocalizing them; though I have been told of sweet voices going about in bands at the fête of Laruns in the valley of Ossau, and of young vine-dressers in the valley of Pau singing in parts, like German students, as they go along the roads to their morning's work; but generally speaking, the birds are the only minstrels,—at least the only ones who will sing without being asked. The chairmen (like mine of Gavarnie) are sometimes prepared with a few of Despourrin's ballads; but there are mountain melodies—and sweet ones, that are never heard except by those who go in search of them.

Through the whole of this fine valley there is a uniformity of character and colouring, which might become fatiguing on frequent repetition; every winding of the road developes a scene nearly similar to that which precedes it; the woods are still in great beauty, though sometimes, perhaps, over-golden: but yet we are a month too late,—the autumnal chill begins to make itself felt in the mountains; and though at mid-day the air is soft

and the sky sunny—delightfully so, yet the evenings are rather raw and the hill-tops misty, to say nothing of the short days, so inconvenient for long excursions.

It is trying a country by a drum-head court-martial to judge of it from the hasty and imperfect means which a visit at this advanced season affords. But even in this superficial way we have seen enough of Bagnères de Luchon to enter into the character of its beauty, and perhaps with a deeper feeling than its summer loveliness could have inspired. The forests have probably more charm,—certainly a tenderer and more poetic interest; the mind is more intensely touched by the aspect of that beauty which fades while it is gazed upon, than by the brighter loveliness that promises to abide our time and scrutiny. But still many summer features have passed away that have left no substitutes,—the sun-sets, the long shadows, the warm twilight, the song of birds, the enamel of the meadows, and all the fresh and variegated minutiæ of nature, which though we pass on without looking into its details, charms the senses by the general gloss and perfume of its balmy surface. Autumn, in the valleys that repose at the feet of

the great mountains, yet out of the immediate reach of their influence, is but the sweet and gradual decline of summer; we still have the liquid amber and bright red of the softened sun-set,—the tender lights of evening,—the unimaginable lights! The throstle and the blackbird, and all the little peckers in the vineyards and corn-fields, sing late and long; the rooks caw on the wing, and the magpie steals a bit of its dreariness out of the coming winter by its household chatter; the mountain distance seems almost transparent, and the woods retain their variegated foliage, their inimitable tinting, with a sweet egotism that resigns its treasures only to the imperative command of winter itself, and even then delayingly.

But in the downright mountain valleys, where the sun sinks below the horizon two or three hours after its meridian; where the close and bitter neighbourhood of heights covered with snow fills the air with icy particles; where the summer trees, uncomforted by the genial warmth of soil or atmosphere, and beleaguered by the cold blasts and early sleet that in the high regions anticipate winter, soon lose their rapidly-discolouring foliage, autumn is more sudden and conclusive. A few

nights sometimes decide the season, and the sweet progression with which winter steals upon us in a summer valley, is changed into a flying leap that completely effaces the interval.

I recollect that three bad days at Cauteretz had advanced matters at least a month. Here, though a little bleakness mingles with the morning air, a little dreariness with the vapours of the evening, still we have hours of exceeding beauty and sweetness; and if something of the early charm of autumn has passed away, yet winter can scarcely be said even to peep over the shoulder of that which remains.

CHAPTER XIII.

PUFFING, QUESTIONABLE IN ITS EFFECTS — THE FLYING BISHOP—THE CAPULET—THE FARANDOULE—PHILOSOPHERS SANS LE SAVOIR — PEOPLE AND PLACES — THE SECULEJO — ITS REMARKABLE BEAUTY — PASTORAL FEUDS—A SUPPER AND A DREAM.

AMONG the mountain wonders of this charming country is the Lac d'Oo, of which report makes tales that sound like the pretty gossipings of the fairies.

It has been questioned whether an object, pleasing or beautiful in itself, is or is not enhanced by puffing. With respect to scenery, I should say not; cried up scenery is judged in general with severity; we are less influenced in our opinions by the judgment of others, than by association, comparison, and those fine links of feeling with whose mechanism we are ourselves unacquainted. In most cases, it is the same with respect to personal beauty; previous crying up, naturally raises expectations which it is always difficult, and sometimes

impossible to justify. Yet, perhaps, we are oftener inclined to view it through the eyes of others, than we are willing to acknowledge.

It once happened that a gentleman, travelling alone, chanced to fall in with a family going the same way, and to become (as often happens in such cases) acquainted with its members. Sometime afterwards this same person stumbled on an old friend, to whom he expatiated on his good fortune in having been the occasional companion of such very agreeable people; adding, in the hackneyed English phrase, "Miss —— is an uncommonly nice girl"—"Nice girl!" exclaimed his friend; "I admire your idea of nice girls. Why she is the handsomest person in England,—that's all." The man turned round, looked again, and worshipped.

But this has certainly nothing to do with the Lac d'Oo, though it has grown out of its subject, I hardly know how, except that having heard it prodigiously praised, I was led to think whether profuse panegyric has the effect of engendering disappointment, or creating a favourable disposition which may go half-way towards realizing its own pre-conceived expectations. Much, probably, de-

pends on the construction of the mind: some people hate praise, which they cannot appropriate, and warring against it under every form but one, find sufficient cause for disliking others in the very circumstance of their popularity. Others, having no opinion of their own, hang their acquiescence on some established hook, and are content to be blown by the wind without inquiring where it comes from.

The valleys de l'Oueil and de l'Arboust, the first which present themselves in going to the Lac d'Oo, are fresh and fertile; but as we advanced, the fancy had not much to work upon. The village of St. Aventin must not be passed without a word of its sponsor, a Spanish bishop and great worker of miracles, who lived in a castle—or tower, which still decorates a bold peak just below the heavens; and who, being attacked in his strong-hold by an army of infidels, made a spring across the whole stretch of the valley, and landed upon a stone which even now bears the impression of his foot,—for he seems to have come down upon one only.

What a sight it must have been to passing travellers—if such were abroad, when looking upwards they beheld the flying bishop careering

through the air,—not like the cross of Constantine, visible only to the selected one, but obvious to all eyes. After having performed many miracles, this holy man suffered martyrdom; and three hundred years after his death, his body having been discovered by a stray cow, a chapel was erected over it, which still shines out in all the glory of white-wash. Travellers are requested in three different places to remember the chapel, which probably means the priest,—a good-humoured man, who stood by smiling kindly, yet triumphantly, as if he would have said, "Poor things! you have no flying bishops in your shabby religion."

Scenery rather austere than grand. In the villages the married women wear a black capulet, and look like the professional mourners at an Irish wake; and the old ones a long-eared white mob, with lappets hanging on the shoulders, and another —a black one, over it. Groupes of these funereal figures formed the live-stock of the village of Oo, a watery desolate-looking place,—at least in the month of October; but they did not seem a whit the less gay for their mourning gear, which habit had probably brightened into rose-colour. The fashion of wearing black prevails in the Pyrenees;

it is in many parts the general dress of the country women; the market of Pau swarms with black cloth capulets, which, though set off with the narrow facing of velvet, are still monumental head-dresses, but with a certain antique and original effect that at first sight is very striking.

I can imagine a very fine woman looking superb in this black hood, she would have such a high lady-abbess air; and who were more magnificent than those monastic queens in their serge robes?—not real ones in their purple and ermine. Only hear how they sound. Charlotte de la Tremouille, abbess of Marmoustiers; Gabrielle de la Rochechouart, abbess of Fontevrault; the illustrious Lady Blanchefleur, daughter of an emperor; and the Lady Amicie—Montfort and Montmorenci—both in one. I have others higher and more sonorous even than these in my head, but they do not come to my pen.

Our merry mourners of Oo were no specimens of splendour, monachal or otherwise; but, as I have already said, as gay as larks. Shoals of young girls passed us on their way to Bagnères, where they were going to hear mass, buy *colifichets*, and dissipate soberly; while five or six, who preferred

green fields, were dancing the *farandoule* (and not ungracefully) in a meadow by the river-side. There is something slow and swimming in the old-fashioned name of this southern dance that takes the fancy, but our guide would make gavotte of it; for which piece of bad taste I could have half scolded him, had I not been too much taken up with the dancers, who now and then interrupted their cadenced movements by immoderate fits of laughter. These poor girls were true philosophers 'sans le savoir:' they had no music but their voices, which made head shrilly against the bellows accompaniment of the strong hitching breath that threatened every moment to refuse its aid to their rude harmonies. Their gaiety set my chairmen moralizing: it was all day-light with these lasses now, they said; but they would have their night by and by,—and a winter's one: a reflection probably suggested by experience.

Yet, notwithstanding these forebodings, we met many autumnal faces with a summer smile still on them; cheerful matrons gallantly mounted upon spunky horses, one of which took fright at sight of my chair. Off jumped the dame, declaring vehemently that she knew her steed, and that it never

could be got to pass it; upon which our guide, whipping off her black hood, threw it over the animal's head, and led it by triumphantly. Oo, like other villages here, has its feudal spectre looking down upon it in the shape of a tower; but no traditions, or I should rather say, none intelligible to strangers, to whom patois is as inaccessible as papyrus. And what is a tower without a legend? a thing unfinished,

"Like a cat without a tail,"

or a charade without a solution.

The inhabitants of these pastoral valleys seem kindly disposed, and often greeted us lovingly as we passed, with pleasant smiles and words which had a good-humoured sound, though we could not understand their import. Some of the girls were fair-complexioned and comely, but the expressive southern head is no longer visible. The hamlets are usually agreeably placed, and at a distance contrived, by the help of their warm roofs of purple slate, (common in the Pyrenees,) to look comfortable; but the near view is often disenchanting. The sashless windows at once convert the house into an unfinished shell,—to the eye at least, and damp all our notions of household snugness.

A monotony of ash trees cruelly peeled. It is inconceivable how these mutilated trees spoil *bits* of the landscape—not *stretches*, or we should grow too angry for enjoyment. But the last reach of the valley d'Oo is powerful from its solitude and wildness. I have seen a 'St. John preaching in the desert,' with just such a back-ground. The lake is beautifully approached, in a fine wild way; the mountains are grand, and here again the beech covers their indented sides, and broad pastures extend over their spreading base. As we entered the gorge, a flock of two or three hundred sheep took up the path before us: a single shepherd, whose melancholy mien attracted our attention, guided their movements; he was in the prime of life and singularly handsome, with something grand and meditative in his air and countenance, which in those 'days when the sons of kings guarded their father's flocks, might have been called royal. There are heads that belong to the desert, and heads that belong to the drawing-room; each would be out of place in the other's sphere, but the first would be only un-niched, the last ridiculous. Our shepherd, transplanted into a brilliant circle, would look like a hero of antiquity, or per-

haps a rebel chief, a sublime incognito from some foreign land of turbulence,—but the 'curled darling' among the sheep!

Gathered rhododendron still in bloom. On the high pastures, the branches of the rhododendron are often the shepherd's only fuel, its crimson blossom the only life-tint that brightens the dark herbage, unless the blue iris comes to share its solitude. There were none to-day; but I found a beautiful—and to me unknown—yellow flower, which my guide (who volunteered taking care of it) lost. After winding some time among rocks crested with beech and pine, we came suddenly upon the lake, which surprised us by the fulness of its beauty. For once at least the preluding trumpets had not spoiled the effect of the show, and the praise which we had imagined exaggerated, was more than justified by the scene.

The popular name of the lake is not its real one; it is not the Lac d'Oo, but the Seculejo, and beautifully it lies in the hollow of the encircling mountains, deep, and still,* and clear; with the dark hills, the clouds, the blue of heaven reflected from its bosom. In the centre of the majestic

* Not always still, they say.

circus, a cascade drops from a height of eight hundred feet, proving how the great fall of Gavarnie would gain in grandeur and decisive effect if, instead of being condemned to a corner, it had occupied a similar position. Behind the fall, rises a lofty peak covered with snow, that overlooks a higher and more sterile desert; in this desert are two smaller lakes which we did not see, but imagined them in their stillness, with the shadow of the eagle's wing upon their surface, and the rebounding stone, detached from its poise by the fleet foot of the izard, making thunder of the echoes. The ascent to these lakes is a sort of ladder of rocks called the Scala: one (l'Espingo) is the source of the cascade; the other, (the Savuncat) is of smaller dimensions, and its waters of such extreme coldness, that nothing living can inhabit them.

But below, and within the sweet compass of the Seculejo and its shores, all is gracious majesty and sylvan loveliness. It was mid-day when we sat down beside its waters,—the Dryades slept, and the winds with them; nothing spoke but the voice of the torrent. In former times, when I used to believe in Pan and the wood-gods, such a scene

would have set me dreaming for a year and a day; and yet the eyes, accustomed to the dimensions of the Swiss and Italian lakes, or the continuous and expansive beauty of Windermere or Loch Lomond, the Seculejo (which is here called a large lake) would seem only a cabinet picture, but one in which the high finish has not impaired the paramount character of grandeur. Its limited, though proud confines do not admit of any other changes of scenery than those ineffably beautiful ones (changes however of aspect, not of scene) produced by the varying lights of heaven, and the colouring of the air. There are no bays, no velvet lawns, no pebbly strand; but a fine downward rush of mountains, and something so remote and sweet, so high up in the hills, and so sequestered without being austere, that its sight dilates the mind. In the bosom of the silent mountains, in the grand and grave simplicity of nature, the heart finds that fulness of repose which, without dressing itself out as enjoyment, is the fruition of delight.

A flock of Arragonian sheep hung on the rocks above our heads, and the wild dog that guarded it barked at us angrily. Before the breaking out of the cholera at Bordeaux, this flock had been sent

over from the Spanish side, and now it must remain here. A particular prohibition exists against the admission into Spain of such animals as might introduce the infection—for the disease is there believed to be contagious—through the medium of their wool or feathers. Touching the shepherds and their flocks, "all is not heaven" among these children of the desert: the frontier mountains are often the scene of deadly feuds between the French and Spanish *pastoureaux*, whose quarrels about the right of browsing-ground, their natural limits and their purchased ones, are occasionally attended with bloodshed, sometimes ending in regular engagements, and often in enduring ill-will.

Returned late to a blazing fire,—white partridges, chevreuil, and salmon trout, or rather *truite saumonée;* and then went to bed with young thoughts about clear lakes in the round hollows of the mountains, which turned, when I fell asleep, to sad dreamings. All night long there was a sound in my ear like the murmuring of the wind in a sea shell, and a voice whispering in a wild, warning way,

"Fathoms deep *your daughter* lies."

O, how glad I was to awake and find it morning! but the song still rang on my ear, and I repeated it unknowingly as my eyes opened. I wish I had not dreamt this dream,—for I know how it will hang upon me till a letter comes to break the spell.

I once asked a little girl of six years old, who had never seen the sea, what she fancied it was like; she said, "the air." Had she been somewhat older, and that I had asked her what a dream was like, she would perhaps have replied, "the clouds," —the clouds that float over the surface of the sky as dreams do over the mind, taking all shapes, all hues; but shapes that break off or melt into others before they become perfect, and hues that die in their brightness—die unaccomplished, turning to dimness before the eye can repose upon their splendour; or shift into forms that, while they seem remembered ones, are lost in confusion.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEPARTURE—BEARS AND BEAR-HUNTERS—BAGNERES DE LUCHON — MINERAL SPRINGS OF THE PYRENEES — MODE OF LIVING—SWITZERLAND AND THE PYRENEES COMPARED — LAKES AND SNOW MOUNTAINS — THE CHARM OF SOLITUDE—RIVERS AND TORRENTS—VALLEYS AND PURE STREAMS—SOUTHERN VEGETATION—TO EACH ITS DUE.

In quitting Bagnères de Luchon, we leave many things unvisited which would have gratified us to have seen; amongst others the Spanish valley of Aran, remarkable (as we are told) for its beauty, and containing within its bosom the source of the Garonne. From its position it ought to be France, but it is Catalonia, and the first Spanish village is only a short distance from the valley of Luchon; but the carabineers in that quarter are inflexible. It is not only here, at Luchon, that we leave unsatisfied wishes behind us; we have already sent them to the beautiful but seldom-visited valleys of the eastern chain, and to Roussillon, with its

Spanish people, its Spanish dances, its pleasant music, and its Shakspeare memory. Those who are ambitious of mountain renown, or who love to contemplate nature in her aspect of glory, climb to the summits of the Maladetta and the Mont Perdu; but those

"Whose baser stars do shut them up in wishes,"

are obliged to content themselves with more accessible pastures—but wild ones too, and sweet; with magic in them for the fancy, and thought, majesty, and power for the mind. Many ladies achieve the Tourmalet, passing over the mountain from Barèges to Bagnères, some la Brêche de Roland, all, or nearly all, the Pic du Midi; but the Maladetta and the Mont Perdu set their activity at defiance. These monarch mountains reveal their mysteries only to the eyes of man; and all who seek for Pyrenean fame, make it a point to ascend one or the other,—perhaps both.

The weather is evidently changing, and as we dread being caught in the snow, we have hastened our departure; and are now adieu-ing to the maidens of the hotel, who are making town curtsies in the midst of the flower-pots, while their father, a renowned *chef*, thanks for past favours, and

hopes for future ones. We have already taken leave of the leafless trees, the deserted baths, the valleys and the mountains of Luchon, and of the deep-toned poetry of its autumnal scenery; but not of the thoughts which grew up whilst we looked on it, nor of the forest-dream that crossed us in the dark path like a sunbeam. We are turning our backs on the unicorn of the Maladetta, the shy izard, and the bears and bear-hunters of this land of Esau,—and just at the moment when the sport seems to be at its point of perfection. Last night there was a *grande battue:* no less than forty turned out to intercept the movements of two weary old prowlers, who are known to be in the forest behind the Hospice; the chase is dangerous but exciting, and, like every thing that is so, followed with enthusiasm. The master of the Hospice, who was one of my chairmen, told me that in winter, when the snow lies deep upon the ground, and the house would, but for constant care, be half buried under it, he comes down to warmer quarters at Barèges; but being obliged by his tenure to leave behind a stock of provision and fuel for the use of such travellers as may happen to pass that way, visits it every day, and never

fails to find the value of whatever has been consumed in his absence, deposited in some conspicuous part of the dwelling.

As a watering-place, Bagnères de Luchon, though much frequented by families from Toulouse and other towns of nearer neighbourhood, is not so generally known or visited by strangers, or even by the French who come from distant quarters, as Barèges, Cauteretz, St. Sauveur, or Bagnères de Bigorre; and yet the eminent beauty of the surrounding scenes might well attract the lover of grand and solitary nature, or charm the worshippers of its softer aspects. Of late it has counted a few English among its visitors, and even at this advanced season one family still remains. It is silent now, and decidedly melancholy, but not unpleasingly so; there are no noisy contrasts interrupting the harmony of nature, the leaves fall silently, the air becomes insensibly coloured—not stained, by the gathering vapours. If the stillness of the forest be disturbed, it is by sylvan and congenial sounds; the character of melancholy, not of gloom, rests upon it, impressed by the decline of nature, not the actions of man; a revel to the mind, but a blank to the stormy passions, affecting

the one with deep and intense delight, awakening it to faith, subduing it to reflection, but offering no food to the fiercer emotions of the soul.

The springs of the Pyrenees appear, by the evidence of certain fragments dug up in their vicinity, to have been known to the Romans; and in the time of Francis the First we have seen that his sister Margaret of Navarre favoured Cauteretz, as Catherine the sister of Henri Quatre, and his mother the Reinne Jeanne, did Les Eaux Bonnes in later days. Barèges was, I believe, brought into fashion by Madame de Maintenon, who accompanied the illegitimate hope of her royal master, afterwards husband, the young Duc de Maine, to its baths, and so gave it celebrity.

These springs differ materially in strength; and a course of the weaker ones are often taken preparatory to beginning the stronger. Those of Eaux Bonnes and Cauteretz, are reputed particularly efficacious in complaints of the lungs; as those of Eaux Chaudes, Bagnères de Bigorre, St. Sauveur, Cauteretz, and Bagnères de Luchon, for rheumatism, paralysis, and various other maladies. The waters of Barèges are unrivalled in their effects in wounds, maladies of the skin, &c. These

waters are generally employed both externally and internally—those of Eaux Bonnes alone excepted, which are rarely used as baths; and when they are, require artificial heating.

More English are said to visit Barèges than any other Pyrenean spring, but with a view to health rather than amusement. In winter it is no longer habitable; but, like the Hospice at the foot of the Venasque, has its guardians, who look to it, and give notice when a torrent breaks loose, or an avalanche detaches itself.

The mode of living is, I believe, nearly the same at all the baths: it is easy and agreeable, temperately gay, and pleasantly unceremonious. Bagnères de Bigorre being more of a town than any other of the bath establishments, has perhaps least of that kind of family union which distinguishes the social circles of Cauteretz; and is (we have been told) the order of the day at all the popular springs that may be said to belong especially to the mountains, and which, from their retired positions, and the scrutiny that strangers necessarily undergo in small places, are not so likely to be the haunts of doubtful or speculating characters as Bagnères de Bigorre. For though self-created

counts and anticipated decorations are not altogether unknown, yet people meet together and form acquaintance with a certain feeling of security which is very agreeable. Bagnères de Bigorre alone boasts a theatre, the other baths have not got beyond Punch and Judy; but the less harmless amusement of play is carried on at all. Few things contribute more to the comfort of an invalid in the Pyrenees than the *chaise à porteur*, which is at once the gentlest, safest, and most agreeable mode of conveyance imaginable; and possesses an immense superiority over the excruciating *char à banc*, or hard-going and sometimes (as I can testify) dangerous horse of Switzerland.

I have always found it difficult to compare the impression which distant objects have left upon my mind, with the livelier image of present ones. As at every moment I hear the Pyrenees and Switzerland compared, and the question of "which do you like the best?" repeated, I often try to put their valleys side by side before me, and by opposing them to each other, form some estimate of their respective claims.

The scenery of Switzerland has, generally speaking, a higher character of grandeur than that of

the Pyrenees, but I think it is less Arcadian: here the southern atmosphere gives a warmth and tenderness to the landscape which approaches it more nearly to the glowing, yet gentle hues with which those poets and painters, from whom our first ideas of Arcadia have been taken, loved to imbue their pictures. A higher character of sublimity belongs unquestionably to Switzerland, it is the very head and front of her pretensions; but in the comparison of pastoral and romantic beauty, the scenery of the Pyrenees sustains itself successfully.

The valleys here are deep, fresh, and delicious; they are more sequestered, more sylvan, and more southern, not only in their climate, but in their vegetation, than those of Switzerland; their streams are perhaps clearer, their verdure more varied, but they sometimes want the wide and unrestricted foliage of those broad trees which in Switzerland dip their branches into the clear lake, and casting their shadows over the sides of the hills, make elysiums of every green spot. But though there appears to me to be more single trees of proud dimensions in Switzerland, yet there are more summer woods here, more green forests; less dependence on the black pine, and an absence of those contrasts which

often displease the eye by their hard and sudden apparition; the harmony of nature is never rudely or jerkingly interrupted, the beautiful middle tints never wanting; and yet there is no monotony in this flow of hues, no more than in the tinting of the rainbow.

But it is not the woods, but the lakes, which form the great distinctive feature. Switzerland glories in her lakes, in their vastness, variety, and splendour; there the beautiful basins of the Gaube and the Seculejo, though perfect as single pictures, would scarely have a dot assigned to them on a map of the country. Nothing becomes mountain scenery like the pure and solitary lake; they were formed for each other, and when dissevered, each loses a portion of its dignity and beauty.

The lonely bay of Fluellen, the majestic shores of Wallenstadt, Thoun with its congregation of mountains, and the head and foot of the classical Leman, seem made to put out all weaker pretensions; and thinking of them, one feels almost inclined to exclaim with regret, "there are no lakes in the Pyrenees." And yet there is something almost fabulously beautiful about those small mountain mirrors; even the character of entireness

and lonely appropriation which they derive from their limited size and unvarying features, has a certain charm in it that deeply affects the imagination. They have neither hut or hamlet on their silent shores; they belong only to the shepherd and his flock: if they are visited by spirits of earth or air, they must be sylvan and gentle ones. A young faun may pipe on the shores of the Seculejo at evening, and a water-nymph put back her hair and listen to the magic of his strain; but there is no abiding place for the gloomy phantoms of the northern desert or the frozen lake. Even the bleaker Gaube, walled in by the Vignemale with its snows and its glaciers, and filled with the solemn music of the gale as it sweeps over its waters, or rushes through a chasm in the mountains, is not austere; it is lonely, and melancholy in its loneliness, but not repelling.

It seems to me, that the snow mountains of Switzerland are another mark, and a grand one. I have not seen any here that wear their virgin mantle in such a perfection of purity: from the glittering summit down to the ample base not a bare spot, not a dark one visible; all white and cold when the sun blazes on them; all steeped at

its setting in that unimaginable rose colour, that pure and living light, of which no words can give an idea, when the mountains seem like entire masses of pale red topaz, that while we linger on their magical beauty, almost believing them palaces raised by enchantment, fade again into the same cold white—the spectral white—which, as it stands out from a gloomy back-ground, or receives the pale moonbeams on its paler surface, looks like something too awfully mysterious for human scrutiny. The great mountains here, on whose lofty front the snow becomes eternal, belong to the desert, they do not form a familiar and stationary feature. They do not look in upon a scene of garden sweetness as the Jungfrau does at Interlaken, nor terminate town-views as the glittering chain of the Oberland Alps does from the terrace of Berne; but there is a spirit of romance in these sequestered valleys, a depth and perfectness of solitude, an absence of the world, and a presence of the poetic feeling, which, like the fabled waters of life, bring back youth to the heart, and recreate within it the precious but evanescent faculty of receiving intense delight from simple objects.

Most of the finest things, all the most popular ones, the valley of the Haut Reuss, Lauterbrunnen, Engelberg, Grindenwald, the valley of Sarnen, the deep bays and wooded coves of Fluellen, Brunen, and Kussnacht, the glens and forests that surround Lucerne, are all accessible from certain points, either to a carriage of ordinary dimensions, or else to the narrow *char à banc;* lakes must be sometimes navigated, but this, in summer, is a luxurious mode of travelling that rather invites than deters the crowd, who, when landed at Brientz or Newhaus, wedge into cars without springs, and jolt on to Meyringhen or Interlaken. Thus the high mountain passes are alone kept sacred by natural obstacles, as they are often, by the apprehension of danger, from the timid footstep. Wherever there are deciduous trees, or grass, or flowers, there are roads,—or at least the exceptions are rare, and in general confined to the passes of what may be called the summer Alps; and the solitudes which procreate thought must be sought in the stony desert, in the region of glaciers, or in those illimitable worlds of snow which nature has barred against all but such as are willing to brave danger for her sake.

If the Pyrenees were the road to Italy, Gavarnie would be speedily—for it might be easily—made accessible to carriages; and then my Bible desert, my grand and desolate Marboré, would become a fashionable circus. Other valleys which have the power of road-making within them, would be generalized and neutralized in the same way,—every path dissected, pic-nic'd, lithographed; every mystery unveiled, every doubt made a certainty; all clear and clean as pavement after a summer deluge, not enough of earth left in the interstices to keep our fancies together; and so its Arcadian character of solitude and stillness, its deep and beautiful loneliness, would be talked, and rode, and driven over and away,—the bloom rubbed off its freshness, and its sweet secrets made mere town talk. There are prophets—false ones I hope, who predict the approach of this state of things, even without the help of an Italy at the other side of the mountains; but at present the rumbling char à banc is altogether unknown, and many of the most romantic spots are only accessible to the small mountain horse, or the sure-footed chairman.

It is to this circumstance that the valley of the

Pont d'Espagne, Gavarnie, and many others, owe their Juan Fernandez air of stillness and seclusion. None of the charming things about Bagnères de Bigorre—the valley of Campan excepted,—are attainable to a char à banc; nor, as far as we have seen, about Bagnères de Luchon either. In point of country feeling and picturesque beauty, much is gained by this circumstance, and in point of comfort and convenience also,—for the chairmen will go any where, and every where; and instead of being racked and jolted in a dislocating machine, those who cannot walk and fear to ride, are carried about like petted children, without the risk of fatigue or probability of danger, and with the powers of observation free, and undistracted by the pick-step feel which sends your startled thoughts into the feet of your mule, or the wheels of your char à banc.

In the long vale which extends from Luz to Gavarnie, the ear is rarely startled by a sound more worldly than the slow tramp of a mule,—unless it be the human voice, which in these solitudes is seldom exalted above the pitch of admiration. If a noise is heard approaching, it is the pattering of a flock of sheep, or the growling of the

shepherd's dog, or the cordial cheer of the herdsman returning from the hills with his wine-skin and kettle on his shoulder, or the fleet step of the izard hunter, or the caressing remonstrance of the peasant girl who tries to coax her refractory nag into a by-path while the travellers pass. This character of quiet remoteness is deeply impressed, and lingers on the fancy as a sweet perfume does upon the senses, mixed up with the recollection of the spot itself, and poetizing its freshness.

Sometimes in the wide valleys the rivers have but little influence on the landscape; nor are they, generally speaking, rivers of such might and moment as those of Switzerland. In the exquisite view from St. Savin, the Gave is almost lost in the breadth of the valley, and the Adour is a feature of small importance in the landscape of Campan; but in the closer glens, the torrent and its rocky frame-work form strong points in the picture; the pure and abundant stream rushes on—sometimes dimpling, and eddying, and sparkling in the sunbeams, but oftenest battling its way through a deep and rocky ravine, into whose mysteries the eye cannot penetrate. The sides of this ravine are often bare and vertical, but overhung at top with

wild foliage; at others, shaded to the brink of the torrent by thick fantastic trees, growing out of the fissures of the rocks, and spreading their prodigal branches over it.

Looking down from the suspended ledge, which often winds like a ribbon up and down the sides of the mountains, cascades of considerable beauty are sometimes caught by the eye as it follows the stream in its windings,—now clear, swift, shallow, —then deep and still, or fierce and foaming; at one moment lost behind the point of a rock, or in the whirl of a cauldron; and the next, dallying with the old roots or wild bushes on its brink, rippling and murmuring, and then flying off again on its wild errand. Sometimes the mountains hem in the torrent, sometimes they recede from it, leaving bright openings and charming meadows, where the cottage and its small dependencies bask in the midst of bubbling springs and green pastures.

Except the wide valleys (pastoral and agricultural) all have a similar character, though differing of course in majesty, as the mountains differ in magnitude and grandeur of form. These wide valleys have prodigious beauty, and are, I think,

unequalled by any scenes of the same character in Switzerland. Many will award to its closer valleys the pre-eminence in beauty, as well as in sublimity; and with the gems of Lauterbrunnen, the fair Haute Reuss, and their sweet and majestic comates set in their hearts, may perhaps come here hardened by previous influences against the impression which the deep glens and romantic gorges of the Pyrenees would otherwise produce. But wherever in its landscape the horizon takes a wide scope and lets in distance, then the southern atmosphere colours magically, and the vague purple that individualizes southern scenery, and with which all who have marked the aërial lights on the high Appenines are familiar, flushes with such sweet warmth the face of nature, that we are apt, after having revelled in its fulness, to find the fancy chilled by the clear and acutely defined palpabilities of the Swiss mountains.

The beautiful transparency of their streams and rivers is a point of honour with the inhabitants of the Pyrenees, who speak with contempt of what they call the turbid waters of Switzerland. I search my memory for a standard of comparison, but cannot find one. I remember the sparkling

purity of its lakes, limpid down to their fathoms, and fathoms-deep encrusted pavement, the exquisite green of the Rhine at Schaffhausen, and the liquid crystal of the Reuss at Lucerne:—I say nothing of the Rhone, because it only becomes blue at Geneva, when it makes its take-leave visit. This is a scanty catalogue of recollections, and makes me angry with my memory for not furnishing me with a better; for I have an old and dear love for Switzerland, and should grieve to do it even tacit injustice. Yet I fear that *the bill is found*; for the clear waters that rush by here at every step, that distil from every rock, and are dispersed through every meadow, make themselves immediately remarkable by their beautiful transparency, which I cannot recollect to be the case (though it may be nevertheless) in that land of pleasant memories

Notwithstanding the scantiness of the soil in the mountain districts of the Pyrenees, and the heat of the climate, an intense verdure is often produced here by constant irrigation—intense, but not monotonous; a mixed cultivation frequently breaks up its uniformity by those 'pattern-book' diversities, in whose many hues the eye finds an agree-

able variety which the universal green excludes. I speak now of the high Pyrenees,—the mountain country; the valleys of Béarn have another character. I have already gossiped of their charming meadows,—flowery, before the scythe comes, as the Prato Fiorito; and after it has passed over them, fresh, green, and smooth as our English lawns. I have spoken too of their noble oaks, which, though often condescending to make hedge-rows, are not the less splendid in their singleness, or less proudly umbrageous when two or three make fellowship together; and of the surpassing beauty of the deep glens and charming côteaux that make a paradise of the neighbourhood of Pau. But the mountain Pyrenees have another character, though still preserving in their wild and impressive solitudes—often even in the vicinity of their highest mountains, a warmth and tenderness of colouring entirely southern.

Pastoral poets and landscape painters would, perhaps, prefer the Pyrenees to Switzerland; its scenery is softer, warmer, more Arcadian; it has more richness and glow, a finer fusion of tints, and more harmony of tone than usually belongs to the strong contrasts and decided outlines of Swiss

landscape; but it has not the same generally daring character, the same universal strength and mightiness. None will refuse to admit that there is great force and sublimity in the high regions of the Pyrenees, when the lonely majesty of nature enthrones itself in the desert; all will allow the infinite—the ineffable beauty of the softer part of Switzerland; but it is of the general character of each country that I speak, not of individual scenes.

The sentiment inspired by the contemplation of nature in Switzerland is often profoundly melancholy; there is awe in it, and great grandeur. The soul no longer looks through a glass darkly, but stands face to face with those high intelligences, of which before it had only gleams. But there is too much coming and going, too much jostling and crowding, too much talking of scenes and projects, for the full indulgence of the intense and solitary feeling which seeks in a world of its own the sympathies that quadrate with its newly-winged desires: but this, it is true, is the fault, not of place, but circumstance. In the Pyrenees the general aspect of nature is

softer, and—if I may say so—more touching; it acts more upon the affections of the heart, and links itself more with our ordinary and human feelings; while we dwell upon it, the mind, full of belief, of happiness, of confirmation, bears upwards; yet with a love of the beautiful earth, a sentiment of its delights, a willingness to linger on it, as if it were another word for heaven: while in the loftier and more solemn regions of the Swiss mountains, it flutters to disengage itself from the interests of life, and tries to lose its present identity in the wide opening which heaven seems to make for it.

Both are admirable; the one is like a sweet bird of beautiful plumage and delightful song—a bird of paradise, who can fly high and nobly; but loves to build his nest in summer trees, and dip his wings in the clear brook. If he sometimes sings at heaven's gate, he is heard too in the woods at evening, and in corn-fields and meadows when the sun goes down, piping his sweet lay of peacefulness and joy. The other finds its symbol in the eagle, who makes his aerie on the highest peak, who salutes the sun boldly and with open

eyes, whose kingly delights are in solitary empire and elementary commotion; but who does not disdain to hover over the deep waters of the lake, or haunt the rocks of the forest, sailing above with his broad wings gloriously expanded,—sublime in war, gravely beautiful in peace, but loving better to furrow his beak in snow than amidst flowers.

CHAPTER XV.

NATURAL PICTURES—ST. GAUDENS—ST. MARTIN—IL N'Y A PLUS DE PYRENEES — TOULOUSE — FIRST EFFECT — CANAL DU MIDI — PAST INFLUENCE STILL PRESENT — LYRIC AMATORY POETRY — BURNS AND THE TROUBADOURS—THE PHYSICIAN—A CAUTION—TOWN STUDENTS —BATTLE OF TOULOUSE — THE OFFICER'S TOMB—THEATRE—FANATICISM — CHURCHES—INTOLERANCE—PAUCITY OF SHOWS — CLEMENCE ISAURE—DUC DE MONTMORENCI — LA BELLE PAULE — GEESE — ENVIRONS — CANAL — AUTUMN PICTURES — COUNTRY TO CARCASSONNE.

I NEVER beheld such an image of joy as presents itself to us at this moment under the shape of a trio of mules in a state of nature, galloping after each other over meadow, through stream, up one lane, down another; ears erect, head thrown up, snuffing the all-sufficing air, and spurning the earth as if it clogged their movements. They are beautiful as the wild ass in the Scriptures, and picture freedom as a caged bird does captivity; just three such mules as in the good times of the

fairies would have served for a godmother's present. But there is no magic now, no sweet story-book illusions; every thing is accounted for from Brutus down to Mrs. A——.*

Another natural picture hangs near this bright one. Three little children have found out a bit in a garden, a robin red-breast corner; one a boy of five years old holds a baby in his careful arms, with that sweet important look, which children, when they feel that a charge is entrusted to them, put on so prettily. Another lifts up the gaunt dog (whose gentle eye shows old and fond companionship) by the fore paws, and walks him forward on the hind ones; the third and youngest (baby excepted) stands still, with one arm across the eyes and the other dropped down by the side—not lankly, but with the roundly-chiselled grace of a Cupid on an antique frieze. Suddenly the dog disengages itself, and springs off in hot pursuit of something that stirs in the bushes; no ravenous wolf more eager in the chase,—but soon at fault, makes a wide wheel round, and sobering as he does so, trots back to have his tail pulled, and be set dancing by the children.

* Vide Sir David Brewster's letter to Sir Walter Scott.

How beautifully are strength and gentleness combined in the character of a dog,—the faithful servant, the trustworthy guardian and loving playfellow of his master's children, but the fierce enemy of the invader. I remember a huge Newfoundlander with whom I was once intimately acquainted,—a wrathful monster, who would have torn a thief to pieces, and was the terror of every one who approached it; yet suffered the children of the house to stuff flowers into his ears, and put his hair in papers.

The beauty of Betrin peeped out from her door as we stopped to change horses, with a sort of Greek-slave air, and a sooty madrass bound round her forehead; while a dear little baby—a dew-drop of a brat, in a beggar-woman's arms, made loving acquaintance with E——, cooing to her like a turtle dove, that had a dash of the saucy sparrow in it; its pretty tricks made us all laugh, to the great delight of its poor mother. Could make nothing of the country to St. Gaudens, for the rain effaced every thing. They say the town is pleasantly situated, but when spouts and gutters run like rivulets, and the market-place is roofed with umbrellas, it is no easy matter to judge; too

dark and wet to see the cathedral, which is very old and (they say) interesting. A comfortless barrack of an inn to the eye, but good beds and rather a *recherché* dinner; a sort of daintiness in the dishes which the general appearance of the house was far from announcing.

Country agreeable to St. Martin, a small town hanging prettily over the river; farther on it declines desperately. For a long way the Pyrenees have kept us company, but we begin to distance them. This morning, as I looked through my wishing-glass, and always towards the Bagnères de Bigorre quarter, I fancied that I could trace the outline of its mountains, and strained my eyes to find out some familiar peak which might tell me whereabouts the town lay, that I might say to myself, "there they are, the dearly beloveds, behind that summit;" but on consulting my map, I found that, like the president Dupaty, who saw the lake of Thrasymene at the Radicofane side of the Appenines, I was out in my geography, and had looked the wrong way. At present I may say, though not in the spirit of Louis the Fourteenth, "Il n'y a plus de Pyrénées!"

Having lost these skyey outlines, the rest of the

country towards Toulouse seems somewhat worse than negative; flat as a billiard-table as we advance; with the exception of a low ridge now and then which goes for nothing. I speak of beauty only, and with a saving clause of respect for what I understand to be remarkable—its great fertility. The châteaux within view are sad castles of discomfort, the campagnes worse; I remarked two, each with the embellishment of a huge straw stack planted exactly in the middle of the avenue which led to the entrance door, so as to interdict all approach; the actual road was probably over the ploughed fields. Yet some have a look, half farm, half manor house, that is not amiss; and others that vast unhusbanded extension which sometimes indicates a thick and social family population, and perhaps as often presents the lonely image of unappropriated space.

Houses, as we advance, somewhat Italian;—a square tower shouldering a slanting roof, then another roof projecting from the first, or a turret starting up in the middle, with roofs growing up round it like two or three houses of unequal height glued together; gardens enclosed by raw mud walls,—an ugly new-settlement feature, of

which a summer or two may perhaps make hedges, though they look as if intended to remain in their original nudity. With my strong leaning to time-beaten towns, the ancient part of Toulouse was sure to impress me favourably: its old bricks, old walls, old towers, and old gateways leading to old houses, or perhaps to inhabited ruins, please my preposterous taste; which, were it better organized, would no doubt take more pleasure in that air of order and progressive improvement that denotes internal prosperity, and of which the more modern parts may perhaps present an image. But dark vistas, and stained colouring, and rude architecture—if it be historical—settle on my fancy, and will not be shaken off; while new bits and brushed up patches, flaring out in the midst of their rusty old neighbours, always seem to me eye-sores.

This city of 'la gaie science,'—'le gai savoir,' of 'joyeaux fabliaux,' floral games, golden violets and silver eglatines, the old Tolosa of the Romans and especial ground of the troubadours, famous for its constant love of literature, and infamous for its fanaticism, (singular association!) presents itself under a quiet aspect, in some parts perhaps a sombre one; but there is certainly movement

enough in the business streets to convict those of a libel who have called it a desolation. It is not rich in works of art or vestiges of antiquity, but it has recollections, good and bad, of great interest; a vaunted climate, fine walks, a very fine bridge, and from it a clear and splendid view (at least to-day) of my dear Pyrenees. The river has but little to say for itself at present, for there has been no rain here for months; and its eight hundred feet breadth is shrunk into comparative nothingness. But a river is always an agreeable object in a southern climate; though it may not be deep enough for a plunge, we can still dabble, still walk our fancies ankle deep in the old Garonne; and though neither oar nor sail be reflected on its quiet bosom, yet can we still find a pleasant touch of life in the stealing movement, the gentle ripple, and love the sense of freshness communicated by its sight: a charm which it may in some measure owe to the distant view of its mountain cradle, that, making illusion in the mind, blends the first rush of its freed waters with their later and more silent progress.

All the business going on here belongs to the grand canal of Languedoc, which forms a channel

of communication between the ocean and the Mediterranean, taking a whole sweep of cities into a share of its benefits. This lion of the south, once called the canal of Languedoc, but now, since provinces have been neutralized into departments, Canal du Midi, is considered as one of the wonders of France, both as a work of art, and a proof of what may be consummated by labour and perseverance under the direction of genius. Late years have made us familiar with wonderful things in this way, but this great work of Riquet's* still holds its ground as a prodigious achievement; the granite reservoir of St. Ferreol, nearly a mile in length, is quite Cyclopean.

But this, like other towns of ancient and historical fame, derives its power over the mind more from past than present influences. Music and song, chivalry and devotion, made this "the city of their joy;" and though there seems little now here germane to the long gone-by, yet the memory of its ancient splendour still remains; "maintes belles et doctes chansons" fall upon the ear, and gallant scenes of court and tournament swim before the eyes. The iron crown of feodalism, idealized

* Paul Riquet, Signeur de Bonrepos.

into finer metal by the power of chivalry, still hangs up here,—at least making trophies, though no longer in common use; and the "vaillant homme aux armes, gracieux et amoureux," equally ready to die for the supremacy of his lady's beauty or the rescue of his Redeemer's tomb, though not in actual circulation, is often sky-seen, like the knight in armour, who (according to the story-book) may be sometimes discovered curvetting in the air on a summer's evening. It is true that these agreeable visions are counterbalanced by others of a more sombre character, and that the inquisition, the auto-da-fé, (mildly styled *sermon public,*) and all the horrors of a crusade pursued in a spirit that may well be called infernal, darken the atmosphere of Toulouse, as of all Languedoc; and make one sometimes forget while thinking of them, that this city was once the focus of those arts which the Moors had introduced into Spain, and which, under the government of the Counts of Provence and Toulouse, were naturalized in their capitals, long the resort of those love-minstrels, whose adventures are more familiar to us than their rhymes, and who made the langue d'Oc the medium of their enamoured fancies.

It has often been remarked, that the highest degree of civilization is in general inimical to the sentiment of love in its purest, most devoted, and most exalted sense. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to find a scale by which we can form a correct judgment of the actual refinement of a people, to whose domestic habits and every-day feelings we are almost strangers: for it is by such knowledge, and not by catalogued pomps or recorded ceremonies, that we learn how far the reality of civilization had become ingrained in the feelings, and its spirit circulated through the arteries of general life. So far however we know, that the Greeks, in their gold and purple age, seemed to have felt little of that passion which has profound tenderness, perfect faith, and willing sacrifice for its elements; which elevates its object by the strength of its individual sentiment, and surrounds it with an atmosphere of holiness. The Roman amatory poets, in the palmy days of their great country's gorgeousness, have shown us by their praises what sort of divinities they worshipped. We have seen the goddesses by the light of the incense burned on their altars, and know them to be deformed and impure. The love-poetry of the

Arabs, whose spirit transfused itself into the lays of the troubadour, has been deemed, by those who are thoroughly conversant with its character, to be more imaginative than tender, more full of conceits than passion. If its source was in the desert, its stream had passed through the channels of refinement; it had come with the other arts of peace from courts and capitals, to capitals and courts where love itself had become a system.

Perhaps lyric amatory poetry is most heartfelt, and consequently most perfect, in that stage of society when love fills up the lapses of a life of hazard, or "enamels with pied flowers" the rugged path of interrupted, not perpetual hardship; for perpetual hardship chills the heart, impoverishes the mind, and substituting the necessity of action for the luxury of thought, subdues the imagination by the rude wear-and-tear contact of common life. It is in these delightful intervals that the poetic power learns from the heart to speak its dear and beautiful language. The muse found Burns at the plough amidst the braes of Ayrshire, loving the daisy, listening to the laverock, and adoring nature from the ephemeral field-flower to the sky and its great glories; rough, but not alto-

gether uncultivated; full of the fresh uneducated instinct of beauty, full of deep and passionate tenderness, unsubdued and unperverted by school or college; with a mind steeped in natural images—not savage ones, a fine sympathy with wrongs and rights, and a soft complacency of feeling cherished by the simple civilization of his cottage home,—not to the extirpation of hardier and more ardent sentiments, but to their nobler and more beautiful developement.

Such circumstances were perhaps, of all others, the most favourable to the ripening of his genius. There was nothing beggarly or cramping in his early poverty, nothing meanly vulgar, and every thing free, natural, and lovely in his first associations; and thus bred, he felt himself a poet, and nothing daunted by the want of a refined education or of the habits of society, wrote,—and how? with all the fire of genius, and all the burning ardour and deep pathos of a new heart. Few will dispute the eminence on which the universal voice, —may I not say the universal heart,—has placed him as the bard of real passion. Had he been a troubadour, a titled minstrel at the court of Raymond de Beranger, his instinct of love might have

transferred itself from the heart to the fancy; he might, like the famous Geoffroi de Rudal, have worked himself into an imaginary passion for an unknown Countess of Tripoli, and died at sight of her; or, like the well-known troubadour Pierre Vidal, have fallen in love with some fair Louve de Penautier, covered himself with the skin of a wolf in honour of her name, and rushed into the woods to be hunted, and half-killed, by dogs, as a new mode of proving his devotion. Then we should have had *tensons* and *sirvantes*, instead of 'Mary Morrison;' and metaphysical verses to the Marguerite,* instead of the sweet morality of 'the Mountain Daisy.' The truth is, that luxury weakens passion, that pampered fancies generate conceits, and that courts and parliaments of love, floral games, and flowers distributed by noble ladies, are mere foster-mothers of true feeling compared with the nursing earth, the sky, the fields, and the free companionship of one's own natural thoughts and inbred fancies.

Poor —— was wretchedly ill on the road, and we feared as the carriage stopped at the Hôtel de France, that, terror-smitten in this time of cholera,

* The flower of the troubadour.

the people of the house might refuse to take her in, but they did not; so we sent immediately for a physician, recommended by our host as the best; and presently a grave yet dapper-looking personage made his appearance, looking as if he had just stepped out of one of Molière's frames,—full suit of black, tail wig, gold-headed cane, and a keen pulse-counting eye, that scarcely needed the aid of the auxiliary finger. But he had no hocus pocus about him, no idea of keeping his patient simmering, or making a job of the matter; in a few hours the fever had subsided, and nothing remained but a little weakness. *Nota bene:* nine French innkeepers out of ten are provided with a medical relation—competent, or otherwise; which *otherwise* being on the cards, the sick traveller's safest way would be, to begin by taking more disinterested information.

Many things in Toulouse recall the old parts of Paris; the best houses often resemble the historical mansions in the distant quarters. It is a rambling old town, but with character about it, and that rusty worn-out look in some parts, that often makes good its claim upon the mind when gayer things fail; at least upon my mind, which finds

here both interest and amusement. Among other things, I greatly admire the bricks, (the universal building material,) and not only the mellow tint of the old ones, but the fine pale red of the new; nothing flares,—the old-fashioned air, warm colouring, and perplexed streets please me; the last because they work the fancy, always baulked by regularity. "What will come next?" is ever an anxious question with the inquiring faculty, and when it is anticipated, a sense of flatness inevitably follows,—*l'imprévu* is always effective. A certain grave parliamentary air, a kind of magisterial yet provincial dignity still characterizes Toulouse. Here, as in other university towns, the students have (it is said) more leisure than they know what to do with; and, as usual in such cases, are apt to put feet to it, and run away from the thought-nourishing repose which those who are studiously inclined court as a blessing. Every thing here promises this blessing to such as seek it desiringly; the very atmosphere is favourable to mental exertion—not a grain of bile in it; and the open, sunny, unembarrassed—though by no means beautiful country, forms just the kind of scene which leaves the imagination at rest; while in its wide monotony

and large horizon, thought, undistracted by the variety or splendour of external objects, finds calm and freedom.

A delight of a day,—and so we took advantage of it, and drove along the banks of the canal into the country; first passing by the field of that superfluous battle,* that barren victory, which left so many breaking hearts behind it,—and none to say, when the talk was of great results, "We owe them to the battle of Toulouse,"—"the battle of Toulouse turned the scale;" none to speak of the benefits conferred upon mankind by the death of the valiant, and which (artificial and misnamed as they so often are) widows call consolation, and orphans glory. Young blood and old was poured out there, as if to make the grass grow, and no more,—a cheaper manure would have done it better.

I have just said that the country was not beautiful; what we have seen this morning is positively the reverse,—or would have been so, but for the sky that pulled it up a little. As we drove along, a neglected but agreeable-looking country place

* The date of the battle of Toulouse was the tenth of April; that of Napoleon's abdication the fourth of the same month.

was pointed out to us, as containing within its woods the tomb of a British officer killed at the battle of Toulouse. I fancied that it might be the grave of Colonel C——, and though I had never seen him, yet the affection which I feel for some members of his family, gave it a more than common interest in my eyes; so we left the carriage, and putting ourselves under the guidance of a man who appeared to be employed about the place, and who strutted before us with an air of confidence as if he himself had been the grave-digger, entered the wood. But after having bewildered us in its mazes, and serpentined us through a dozen windings, all ending in the same point, our cicerone suddenly halted at the statue of some woodland divinity in a comfortable round-about petticoat, which he gravely assured us was the tomb of the British officer; but seeing that we looked at it more than doubtingly, he became confused, and vanished, while we turned round, through a side alley.

Another man now approached in the working garb of a country mechanic, with a huge cornelian surmounting his watch key. But he soon contrived, and without any vulgar display of dignity,

to let us know that he was himself lord and master: this was good tact, for his dress—certainly not his manners, which were perfectly good,—might have led us into some error embarrassing to both parties. By him we were conducted to the grave, which was not that of Colonel C——, but of another British officer: it was in a dilapidated state, the inscription defaced, the urn mouldering. Our polite guide said that he respected the memory of a brave man even though an enemy, and had planted a cypress at each corner of the tomb; but a cold winter had destroyed them, and some July patriots in a brief effusion, had done the rest.

Went to the theatre in the evening. The square in which it stands, (Place du Capitol,) looked like something at Venice or Naples: booths, cafés, hotels,—all brightly illuminated; women in movement, men in groupes, and the rich sunset glow still lingering in the western sky, as if it waited to bid good-by to the moon, whose poetic orb was just making itself visible. Dress, scenery, and acting respectable; the play Molière's, the house thin, and the audience homely. It was interesting to see the often anathematized *Tartuffe* acted in the same town, which seventy years before

had witnessed the sad and disgraceful tragedy of Calas,—and received with applause, though without enthusiasm.

Fanaticism, both religious and political, is said to be on the wane in the south of France, even in Toulouse,—Toulouse, where wisdom was taught and persecution practised at the same time; where the university and the inquisition sprang up together, and knowledge never succeeded in rooting up intolerance. Hearing this, we think of Duranti and Ramel, and thus thinking, rejoice,—as all reflecting minds must when a popular prejudice, exciting to crime or perpetuating injustice, wears itself out. But how rarely does it do so! Nothing so hard to subdue as a popular prejudice, nothing so awful; it braves laws, it rejects good,—it refused redemption! But there is, in truth, a constant principle of activity, which however it may be kept down, crushed, trampled on, scattered, still reunites its fragments, works upwards — slowly perhaps, but surely, and at length lifts its head above the load which falsehood, injustice, and too ready belief have laid upon it.

When we returned homewards the moon had full empire, and slept upon the old house-tops as if

they were Mount Latmos. Atmosphere warm and balmy (10th of October) as in the middle of summer, and the square twinkling with lights and lanterns as if a swarm of fire-flies had settled on it.

Strolled into the cathedral, having a hankering after old churches, no matter of what age or architecture. Some poor women knelt in the dark corners entirely absorbed in prayer. How often, when on entering a Catholic place of worship such figures have caught my eye, have I wished to kneel down with them and pray *too*; and how often have I regretted the churlish custom which closes our churches, except at the stated period, the season of premeditated piety, against the overcharged heart, that would fain lay itself and its griefs at the foot of the altar.

There is something peculiar in the architecture of this cathedral, something lop-sided; the choir being in one corner of the nave, instead of in the centre. Saw it again dressed for a fête, its fine nave looking like a coarse curiosity shop; faded tapestry at one side, gaudy pictures at the other; gilt scutcheons, silver ones, and a wilderness of artificial flowers. The church of St. Saturnin (or

Sernin) is very imposing, and the almost twilight in which we saw the interior, greatly aided the effect of its grave and antique architecture. The portal is richly sculptured, and behind the choir is a succession of small chapels lined with carved presses sumptuously gilt, and containing bodies of saints and martyrs enough to furnish a catacomb. The church of La Daurade interested us less, and that of St. Alban, (I think the name was,) pronounced by our lacquey supereminent, being all in darkness when we arrived, was lost to our curiosity; which, however, resigned itself to the disappointment with that sort of tranquillity so apt to grow imperturbable—when sight-seeing is in question—towards the close of a bustling day.

The ancient cities of France are nobly embellished by their grand and dim cathedrals, and the fine gothic character of their ecclesiastical architecture in general. The spirit of religion dwells within the walls of these grave and majestic structures, elevating the mind above the exaggerations of fancy, directing it to the regions of faith, or taming down its audacious flight to the serious tone of humble and confiding piety. The long, unbroken, gradually narrowing, gradually darkening double

line of columns; the atmosphere of holiness; the veiled light falling on the sculptured choir through the amber, purple, or living red of the gorgeous windows that glow like precious stones; the unity of design creating unity of feeling,—altogether combine to produce a grand and simple effect, that effaces by its singleness all that cozenage of art which disturbs thought in *modern edifices*, and beggars by its calm grandeur all the laboured splendour of variety.

In former times, when a sentiment of gross and brutal intolerance was cherished as a pious and praiseworthy feeling, it was the custom here that a Jew should be brought out to the people on every Easter Sunday in the metropolitan church of St. Etienne; there to receive the blows which, according to the barbarous spirit of the age, were annually inflicted on one of those unfortunate children of Israel. And once it happened that Hugues, chaplain to Aimeri Vicomte de Rochechouart,* struck the Jew, "bailla le souflet au Juif," with such ferocity, that his brains fell out upon the earth. The Jews afterwards purchased, by weight of gold, an exemption from this cruel

* Some chroniclers say Aimeri himself.

and debasing custom. Another disgraceful scene is recorded as having taken place in the church of St. Gilles, when Raymond Count of Toulouse, being suspected of favouring the doctrine of the Albigenses, underwent, with a cord round his neck, the ignominious discipline of the church upon his naked shoulders. After which humiliating ceremony, he was deemed sufficiently purified from heretical taint to be enrolled amongst the crusaders, as the persecutors of the new belief were denominated. In the barbarous war of extirpation carried on by those defenders of the faith, a great portion of Languedoc was desolated; massacre was the key to paradise, and the pilgrims burned, sacked,—and praised God!

A sweet morning, with a suspicion of autumn in the air: just enough for softness, and no more. Walked about, and looked again from the bridge, and into various holes and corners. In the way of sight-seeing there is not much to do at Toulouse; its *recommendations* are, its walks, public library and institutions, museum, theatre, climate, facilities for cheap living, and—I should add—churches; its *shows*, the canal, the château d'eau, that supplies the city with water and looks like a

huge pasteboard tower in the midst of the old brick-work that surrounds it, the mill of Basaele, and the Hôtel de Ville; the last borrowing its interest from its associations, but in itself, though exteriorly a handsome building, of little attraction. Saw some good company-rooms fitted up as for a city festival, and in one a throne erected for Napoleon, and ready for the next royal shadow that may fret its hour on the same trapped-door stage. When his 'graced person' honoured the banquet, it might have boasted a temporary splendour; but nothing now remains save a little superfluous upholstery. In one of the saloons is the statue of Clemence Isaure, the "Sappho" of Toulouse, and reviver of the company of the Seven Troubadours under the title of the society of the Floral Games. A wreath of dusty *immortelles* tumbles over the nose of the poetess, whose actual existence, long problematical, appears now proved to the entire satisfaction of the burghers of Toulouse. An inscription, placed beneath her statue, testifies to the fact of her having not only benefited her native town by the institution of a society for the revival of the art of poetry and the encouragement of literature, but also constructed several public market-

places, which she bequeathed to the *capitouls** and inhabitants of the city, under the poetical and loving condition of scattering roses on her tomb. A custom long adhered to, as was that of placing the golden violet, the silver eglantine and marigold, and the pink—added for the encouragement of very young poets, on the high altar in the church of the Daurade, where this illustrious lady was buried. These were the original prizes destined for the successful competitors in the floral games; to which Louis the Fourteenth added the golden amaranthus, and an individual, whose name appears to have been forgotten, a silver lily, to be adjudged to the author of the best sonnet, or other work in honour of the Virgin.

In the hall of illustrious men,† the bust of Pibrac finds a place; but notwithstanding this species of local immortality, "les quatrains de Pibrac," like "les doctes sentences du Conseiller Matheiu," may thank the amber of Molière for

* The municipal magistrates were permitted to bear the title of Capitouls by Alphonse Count de Toulouse, who at the same time conferred many other and more important privileges on the citizens, in testimony of his gratitude for their vigorous defence of the town against the arms of Louis le Jeune.

† Toulousians.

their preservation. It was in the court of the Hôtel de Ville that the Duc de Montmorenci was executed, after the battle of Castelnaudari in 1632. History has written him down *traitor*—traitor to his king; but to his wife—the wife who for ever after sat alone in the chamber of mourning, taking that sad line for the motto of her heart,

"Rien ne m'est plus, plus ne m'est rien!"

and proudly refusing the visit of the man who would fain have insulted by his homage the widow of his victim:—what was he to her? O what a fond and faithful heart that must have been, to which another answered so fondly and so faithfully!

The concierge showed us the sword with which he was beheaded. It was not so mild (she said) as the guillotine. I asked her if that was often used here now; she said not, adding "now it only punishes the guilty, but it was not always so. I remember the day when I saw a good and virtuous lady as any in Toulouse, pass by with her hands tied behind her back going to execution, and all because she had sent a little money to her son, who was an emigrant." How such recollections darken the sky of France, be it ever so bright! I feel this continually.

Good resident society in the winter at Toulouse (they say), but at present the fashionables, demi-fashionables, and semi-demi, are all at their campagnes, seeing justice done in the vineyards. I could not discover the traditionary balcony from which La belle Paule looked down twice a-week on the admiring multitude, receiving the homage that man naturally pays to beauty. If there was a Messire Paule, count, baron, or chevalier, what a time he must have had of it, with a wife *en exposition*,—standing up to be gazed at! delirious, probably, two days in the week, and the other five flat as mulled port that had lain all night upon a pewter plate;* and no doubt callous to starers as the German giantess, poor Mrs. Gulley, whose seven feet two all eyes may measure at a shilling a-sight.

Good Mrs. Gulley, forgive the comparison; you who stand chastely *mother-Eve-ing* it amongst your serpents, but wiser than Eve—untempted, though surrounded by a legion of boa constrictors, may well be offended at it. It is not to display your charms to the coarse gaze of the rabble that you ascend your throne of scarlet serge, but honestly to verify the seven feet two inches set

* A well-known nursery nostrum.

forth upon the show-board; while your worthy mate, happier than Messire Paule, takes a shilling from each visitor. Honest gains! not due to any improper display of his wife's beauty, though you are a fine woman, Mrs. Gulley,—indeed, considered by some a Patagonian Venus,—but merely by sticking scrupulously to the seven feet two. He may well lay by for the winter day, who, like Mr. Gulley, has the proud feeling of doing so in all honour; conscious that, whatever respect may be inspired by your supernumerary inches, he has never yet condescended to hang you out as an object of allurement to the rabble.

But the goddess in the balcony, turning to the right and to the left! or suppose her even standing in still complacency, submitting her marvellous loveliness to the common gaze with as much modesty as so tarnishing a position admitted of, yet still what an abuse of the purity of womanhood! I have a portrait now in my memory of that lovely thing a household spirit, going about with a charm in its voice, its eye, its touch; a sympathy in its bright look that dove-tails with our human hopes, and joys, and sorrows so exquisitely, that it seems to be of one piece with them;

the natural touch so beautifully on it, the almost angel, yet mere woman, so deliciously felt and painted,—that La belle Paule hardens into a sign-post near it. The name of my portrait is "the Phantom of Delight."—*Pinxit*, Wordsworth: *invenit*, the soul.

Geese might pass here for the sacred birds of the south—that is, upon strangers who do not wait for particulars, and only see that they are fattened up like idols, and can hardly waddle under the weight of grease forced upon them. But, poor things! they are only victims crammed for the palate: the liver, swollen by artificial means to an unnatural size, is considered as the *bonne bouche:* then come the legs, salted at Pau and potted at Toulouse, and probably many other tit-bits with which I am unacquainted. The fat, which is esteemed peculiarly delicate, is frequently used for culinary purposes instead of butter, and by many preferred to it. Pigeons, too, are treated here with distinction, and rather elegantly housed, having usually a separate establishment—a turret of their own raised upon arches or columns, and oftenest placed in some spot that one might fancy chosen for its pleasantness. A lady of Toulouse once told me,

that a family might live here in the best society, keep a carriage, give dinners, &c., for 300*l.* a-year. Perhaps she meant a French family; for strangers are seldom admitted to a full participation of native advantages, or a thorough knowledge of real prices.

The immediate setting round of Toulouse is flat, and we thought dull; but have been told of charming things where passers by do not go to look for them. All that volunteers itself is at present crisped up and discoloured from long continued heat and dryness: a spell of five months without a drop of rain is not freshening. We found some agreeable country pleasantly broken up about the Auch road, and some cheerful country houses; one that made a splendid appearance through the trees that partly screened it, and others of less pretension, but fresh and pretty in their gay garniture of leaves and flowers.

October 13th. Quitted Toulouse. A July day, after a vapoury morning; numerous country houses on each side of the road, and one of a very English appearance,—a fine house, with a sheltering wood, clumpy plantations, and the materials of a sweeping lawn, only choaked up by maize, and hedged into compartments. In the arrangement

of a French *campagne*, there is usually an omission or a commission that one wishes to supply or efface. As we get on, the landscape loses whatever it may have before possessed in point of pleasantness: it is a dull, lean, poplar country, thickened with pollard willows. Now and then a château, like a county jail or a private madhouse, is distantly visible; but being usually mud-coloured, makes small show.

A little general brightening towards Castelnaudari, where we exchanged horses: saw nothing, or almost nothing, of the town, but had another peep of the canal, which here expands into a basin. A few miles off, in the Black Mountains, is the great reservoir of St. Ferreol, from whose stores its abundance is supplied; three rivers pour their wealth into its capacious bosom, and are sent out again through the hundred and fifty miles' length of the canal. If rail-roads go on as they promise to do, *canal* will soon become an obsolete word: the first will probably supersede the last altogether. I have never seen a rail-road in activity, but fancy it a still less agreeable object than even a canal. Both must be disfiguring to the country through which they pass, cutting it up ungra-

ciously; but then a canal often renders it unhealthy,—to say nothing of the immense loss of time wasted in the slow progress of inland navigation; while the rail-road almost realizes the fables of the wonderful lamp and the wishing-cap.

For the last two or three posts, the country has decidedly mended; the horizon widens, mountains close the distance, and the ground below the eye is broken up agreeably; all scorched, however, and the sun blazing hotly upon it. The beauty of a corn country consists in the fulness and freshness of the picture which it presents to the eye; but harvest over, the wide stretches of stubble that remain parching under a southern sun still in its vigour, recall no recollection of its budding green, or riper yellow. There are few trees here, and no grass; nothing but clods and stubble,—gratifying (no doubt) to agricultural eyes, and pleasant for the turkeys; but for those who love to see the young corn dressed in that sweet green of its own, always the very brightest in the livery of spring, or to watch the ripening grain and the red flowers, or the blue ones, that start up wilfully and lavishly among the bending stalks,—and moreover whose bills are not made for a choke of

straw, or a stray barley-corn, the dry litter of the fields at this moment has not much charm.

When the plough comes, with its present picture and its future promise, bringing up thoughts of rural life and pleasant images of rustic homes, and husbandry and plenty with every broken clod; then, indeed, there is a beauty in the fields, a moral loveliness, that even the budding spring can hardly equal. But the turkey interval, the general straw-yard, has few charms in a southern country, unless perhaps to the philosophic (ought it to be philanthropic?) eye, which looks not only on the surface of the earth, but into it, seeing beauty in all that prefaces utility. But to the general one, the dog-day sun seems out of keeping with a scene that wants a soft autumnal sky, recent moisture, red-breasts, blackbirds, the solitary sportsman followed by his anxious dog, the distant cry of hounds,—the imagery of the north, in short, and the dull but softening harmony of its universal tint.

Almonds and tamarisk every where, and considerable population, towns, villages, and farm-houses, always in view of the road. Comfortless villages, with solid stone houses looking worse

than meaner dwellings, for they have the air of being tenanted by poor occupants who cannot afford to keep them in repair, while the shabbier ones are of a piece with their inhabitants. Every village here is a street, into which any one of the country buildings—so little have they of real country character, might be transplanted without appearing out of place. Stone is every where in abundance, here as all over the south of France; the humblest habitation has usually its doors and windows faced round with it. In the Pyrenees every cottage has its complement of marble so employed,—and what is far better, almost every one its bower of foliage. With the peasant of the Pyrenees, shade is an article of luxury duly appreciated; but here it is no more thought of, than if the sun were nine months in the twelve below the horizon. And yet scarcely a day passes, even at this late season, that I do not at some hot hour in it envy Jonah the shade of his gourd.

CHAPTER XVI.

CARCASSONNE—THE LADY OF CARCASSONNE—THE GARDEN BOWER—BARBEIRAC—MOUX—COUNTRY TO NARBONNE—THE FAIR SEX—HIGH MASS—GIRAND RIQUIER AND THE TROUBADOURS—HONEY—BEZIERS—ITS SIEGE—NAPOLEON—THE STILL REMEMBERED—THE SCHOOLMASTER—DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE—NATIONAL EDUCATION.

CARCASSONNE.—Friday. "Ephraim feedeth on wind:" happy Ephraim! But for those who cannot accommodate their organs to such spare diet, what can be more tiresome than driving about with the encumbrance of an appetite from one hotel to another, and finding all occupied? Two hours ago, we should have answered—'nothing;' but now that we have supped, (though slenderly,) and are exceedingly sleepy, we all agree that the supreme bore is the being obliged to wait till the old general in the next room has done with the warming-pan.

As I am on the subject, I would fain say some-

thing of that old-fashioned utility, at present under the ban; but which, however unwholesome its vapour may now be deemed, is still the only test of damp sheets, or preservative against their evil effects, which travellers who are obliged to sleep in unchimneyed chambers can command. It is not long since I heard the demerits of this household comfort discussed in a tone of horror; but those who have sat by in silent hopelessness, as I have sometimes done, while the copper vessel of Etruscan shape, half full of warm water, has been gracefully passed backwards and forwards over the steaming sheets, know its value.

The chroniclers of Carcassonne pay homage to the widow of a Saracen chief, who defended the city boldly and successfully against the arms of Charlemagne, and who is honoured in their legends under the title of the Lady of Carcassonne. This town makes a melancholy page in the history of the Albigensian crusade, and a bright one in the wars of Aquitaine, when the burghers of Carcassonne defended their unwalled town valiantly against the army of the Black Prince. It is now remarkable for its manufactories of cloth, and

respectable for the general spirit of industry that prevails among its inhabitants.

Fine boulevards and handsome garden-houses skirt the town, and give it an air of importance, and a very agreeable appearance altogether. On an opposite eminence rises an irregular mass of dark stone, like a fortress with a town within its walls. This is, or rather was, the ancient city: of the more modern one we saw but little, and that little under the influence of hunger and impatience. A square planted with trees, and set round with arcades in the Italian way, with a fountain that seemed to us as we passed it rapidly to be worth more than a glance, was the only thing that attracted our attention in our hasty whisk from one hotel to another; which ineffectual whisking ended in our returning back again to the handsome boulevards, where we at last housed ourselves in an airy, comfortable hotel (St. Jean Baptiste) agreeably situated. From the top of the house is a view of the old town with its castle, and the newer one with its canal, &c., altogether arid and meagrely outlined, but we went up to see it, having nothing better to look at; indeed, we have not had

much to spoil us lately,' and begin to forget the scales and measures of the Pyrenees, and to exclaim, how pretty! to every bush that has not a year's dust on it.

Sunday. Intended to have seen whatever was to be seen in the church way, but find myself nursing a cold; so if there is any thing curious or interesting at Carcassonne, it remains a sealed book to me. But opposite to my window are some large green trees that set me thinking; and a bower, or rather open summer-house, with an ancient lady and a group of quiet girls in it, that break up my reveries when my eye chances to light upon them. They look prim and reserved, as French girls often do in the presence of their elders, and one bends her head over a book, as if the secret of her heart were in it; the lower part of her face is in shadow, but the forehead is fair and even, and marked by two lines of dark hair evenly parted, and lower down by two delicately defined eyebrows. I wish she would look up; and yet perhaps if she were to do so, the castle which I am in the very act of building for her might be overthrown by the first glance. No: the castle keeps its ground, and the face which is now turned towards me, though not a

literally handsome one, has something tender and pensive in it that quickens fancy.

Stopped as we quitted the inn to look into a stable,—low arched, and deep as a cavern diving off into perspective. These cavern-like stables, coved and dim, are sometimes exceedingly picturesque; they are common in Languedoc, and form a supplement to the farm-house or country inn, sometimes as large again as itself.

Flemish planting towards Barbeirac; osier banks, and a river marked by a line of poplar, or darker trees, and some pleasant openings. Almonds every where, but out of bloom, and no better than the osiers. Here are olive trees, the first we have remarked, and on a par with the almonds for beauty; indeed, they might be mistaken for pollard willows, of which we have a superabundance. Willows, and poplars too, are like misfortunes, sure never to come single; where you see one, you may reckon on hundreds, and yet there is no moisture here to keep them up,—I mean the willows, for the sorrows are sure to find their own dew. At Moux, where we changed horses, not a drop of rain for ten months,—so said the post-master. What a treasure would that tree be, of which the historian of Philip

Quarll, the respectable supercargo Mr. Edward Dorrington, makes honourable mention. It grows in the middle of Fero Isle, and "being (as the grave narrator says) continually covered with clouds, its leaves drop always excellent water." A few slips of it here would be worth a ship-load of ingots.

Not a rill, pool, or even puddle from Carcassonne to Cruscade. The country always highly cultivated, though bone dry, (as the washerwomen say of their linen,) improves into agreeableness; we have a wide vale to the right, with glistening villages scattered over it, a soft distance, some tufts of green in the near landscape, and some dark lines of wood. Soon drops again into meagreness, naked rocks, starved vines, and stunted olives powdered with dust, and looking white and round as cauliflowers. A moist season (if such a thing ever occurs here) must give a different aspect to the country; but it has nothing about it that could be freshened into beauty, nothing good but the distant hills: the near ones are raw and stony.

A branch of the great canal traverses the old town of Narbonne, the birth-place of Marcus Aurelius, and the capital of the ancient Gaule Narbon-

noise. It still retains some traces of its Roman masters, which, with the cathedral, form the show list. Tired, and not very well; so resign myself to a seat in a window and a peep at the people, as I cannot see the place. L—— and —— have been running through its intricacies; one says it is detestable, the other calls it curious: may not both be right? At all events, it has strong alliances with thought and memory, and so must have a certain interest.

A huge hat of black felt, something like the Arragonian sombrero, but still larger, shades the faces,—I cannot say the pretty ones, of the market girls; the town ones prefer a sort of nunnish looking hood, or a stiff muslin cap turned up at the ears, and coved lightly over the forehead, helmet fashion. Just witnessed a very disgusting scene, in which the fair sex took the lead with a daily-bread ease peculiarly offensive. It was a contest between some male and female porters for the privilege of unloading a cart; the women drubbed the men, who behaved with exemplary forbearance, scarcely defending themselves from the attacks of the furies, who, screaming and quivering with rage, hung like blood-hounds on the flanks of their

opponents. What Megaras for a popular tumult! An old one stood up in a cart into which she had forced herself, and seizing the reins, personified Bellona quite fearfully.

The men could have easily routed them had they wished it, for they were double their number; but they gave in with a sort of *place aux dames* air, going rapidly out of fashion in more distinguished circles, and which one does not expect to find taking refuge amongst the porters of Narbonne.

After breakfast, heard high mass at the cathedral; soft chaunting and the organ beautifully touched. The organ is a religious instrument: its sound is like the beauty of Milton's angel, severe yet heavenly. During the elevation of the Host, its tones seemed changed; a sweet yet reverential awe, a timid but sustained joy, spoke in its swelling harmonies; the office was performed with solemnity, and the congregation appeared not only attentive, but absorbed. A woman, who knelt near to the railing of the high altar, seemed profoundly touched; she pressed her prayer-book to her eyes, her forehead, her breast; clasped her hands, clenched them together, held them down at their

extreme length with her arms screwed into her sides; then raised her head slowly upwards, and the next moment hung it on her bosom, linking the fingers of both hands together and turning the palms outwards, with a sort of giving up to grief, an intenseness of feeling which, had her countenance been capable of expressing the sentiment that filled her mind, would have aptly imaged the sorrow of the women who came at dawn of day to the sepulchre, and "found not the body of the Lord." The desolation was there, and its grandeur; but the face was that of a mere *poissarde*, in the positive opprobrium of the word.

The choir was full to overflowing; so we sat down on a stone bench in the nave, and had no sooner placed ourselves, than we were perceived by two ladies, who immediately sent a woman to us with chairs; and at the same moment an old man brought me one from which he had just risen, and before I could either refuse or thank him for it, was down on his knees in a corner praying on the pavement. The woman too disappeared without even a '*merci*,' for her disinterested civility. How greatly do these small courtesies dispose the mind to receive a favourable impression, not only

of the individual who offers them, but of the national character; and how far beyond its apparent sphere may the influence of a look or a word extend! Mass lasted so long, and the supplementary procession threatened to last so much longer, that we were obliged to steal away without seeing the interior of the choir, which is enclosed within a heavy screen that greatly impedes the architectural effect of the edifice.

Narbonne, maugre its pagan origin (being granddaughter, after a manner, to Hercules,)* and its ancient and friendly connexions with the Saracens, is a very Christian city, and one of the earliest converted from heathenism; for, according to the chronicle, Sergius Paulus the deputy, seeing how Elymas the sorcerer was punished, believed; and coming to Languedoc, preached Christianity to its people. So did later proselyters; but with sword and brand, not words. The ferocious Foulques, and the politic Peter of Benevento, have both left recollections of their active piety; and in nearer times, Richelieu embalmed it with his own peculiar spices of sanctity. Girand Riquier, almost the last of the troubadours, was of this

* Whose son Narbon was its founder: so says the legend.

place; but the profession had fallen from its high repute, and the Arabian colouring of the Provençal poetry been effaced by grosser hues long before its extinction.

The sudden bursting out of the springs of poetry in a dry land, is one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of this divine art; and the poetical colouring which the South of France receives from the loves and the lays of the troubadours, is even now not amongst the least of its attractions. Yet, in the prose translations which Millot has given us of troubadour rhymes, and the specimens with which we have become acquainted through other mediums, we find little proof of poetical genius, and in its stead an artificial character which always argues and creates coldness. Sometimes there is bluster, sometimes gracefulness, but in general a total absence of the passion of poetry, a meagreness of imagery, a fondness for conceits, and nothing of the rude energy which we occasionally find in the dawning of an art, compensating the absence of higher-toned faculties. A fatiguing monotony prevails through all the love verses of that "populace de troubadours," each of whom celebrates, in nearly similar strains,

'la bouche fraiche et riante,' 'le joli parler,' the grace and *gentillesse* of the lady of his love,—'bel espoir,' 'bel déport,' 'bel cavalier,' 'miels de donna,' and so on, to whom, rejecting the more familiar names of Jordana, Beatrice, &c., those elaborate rhymers loved to give the fantastic ones which a passing word, a casual movement, had suggested to their fancy.

They talk here of marshy environs full of fever and ague, but to the eye they are not disagreeable. Live hedges, chiefly of tamarisk, some trees, and foliage still green, but a melancholy preponderance of willows. I have left Narbonne without speaking of the honey, which is too strongly aromatic for my taste; its boasted compound flavour is less pure, and (I thought) less agreeable to the palate than the unmedicated sweets of our own hives. It is literally apothecary's honey; highly valuable as a drug, but very much overpraised as a luxury.

I once tasted Hybla, that true *extrait des milles fleurs*, and thought the same of it. To taste the flowers of Hybla in any way was something worth, but the fancy banqueted more than the palate.

This country of honey is remarkable for its aromatic herbage, and from that circumstance, as well

as from skilful management, and the custom of often removing the hives to fresh pastures, comes its potent flavour and its medicinal qualities. What a fairy tale has that immortal Anne Radcliffe made of this same Languedoc! and the odd thing is, that we continue to love her fancy pictures, and almost to believe in them even while we have the dusty reality before our very eyes. The consecutive sweetness and gentle colouring of tame scenery in certain climates, often repose the mind agreeably; but what we have seen of this country of romantic memories is not only tame, but dry. The dusty south of Languedoc, and the soft green south of the Pyrenees, are two very different things; nothing there is bleached, or hard, or arid. I have seen landscapes in the low lands without one eminent feature, where nothing was any thing in itself, but in which, after sunset, when the sky was a pale, illumined, equal amber, the earth a humid green,—when the trees cast no shadow and the air was silent, there was a character of quiet beauty made up of colouring, warmth, and stillness, on which thought grew while it reposed, as a child does while it sleeps on its soft pillow.

Mounted up into a dreary sea-coast looking

country, but no sea; nothing but vines and a crumbling soil, that gave us bushels of dust at every step. Then came a wide vale, a shining town, dark hills, and their shadows; and then a little peep of the sea, but where I cannot exactly remember. Virgil, they say, was sometimes out in his geography,—how comforting! and our dear Shakspeare gave a sea coast to Bohemia;* but my sea was only a streak between two hills, like the tin line that finishes an opera ocean, so I made no note of it.

Béziers sits high, with a bold church on its summit, a gentle river at its feet charmingly fringed, and a fine walk massively shaded lying along its brink. The church has an excellent tint of rust upon it, that reposes the eye from the glare of the white houses, and falls in beautifully with the blue sky; and the terrace a fine view of the rich valley, through which the Orbe winds gracefully. The position of the town is noble and domineering; I thought, as I looked up at it, of the terrible Simon de Montfort, the general executioner, whom the monkish historians called the Machabeus of the age; and of that tremendous siege, when

* Winter's Tale.

the Albigenses were put to the sword and massacred without a touch of mercy. Not a living soul escaped! and one, who wore priest's robes,* cried out to those who asked how they should distinguish the heretics from the Catholics that were within the town,—"Tuez les tous: le Seigneur reconnaîtra les siens."

All were massacred! This vast and general desolation is scarcely comprehended by the mind; it stands afar off, almost too infinite for sympathy. The wind rises in the desert, and heaving up the sand as it rushes onwards, buries the whole caravan beneath its weight:—we hear of the general inhumation, shudder, and forget it. But should we be told that a woman had escaped, and that having no other living being near to her but the infant at her bosom, had watched it as it lay dying of hunger,—she, the mother who had borne it, but who sat alone with it in the desert, then should we feel our sympathies instantly and keenly awakened. When the Hebrew children were massacred by order of Herod, there was great lamentation in Ramah, every house had its dead; but it is with Rachel—that lone woman weeping for her

* Arnold Amarie, Abbot of Citeaux, the Pope's legate.

children, and who would not be comforted because they were not, that our hearts bear company.

And yet those canons in their choral robes, who gathered round the high altar in the old cathedral, tolling the bells as if they would pray by louder voices than their own to those who came to slaughter them,—and those bells that never ceased till all was silent, have something in them that shakes the soul like an individual horror.

The country about Béziers is one of the richest tracts in France. It is a wine country, and the inhabitants are wealthy proprietors, who live in handsome houses faced with white stone, and balconied like the fine mansions of a capital. Vintage in full vigour, (every where else it seems over,) and the grapes, which we bought for almost nothing, absolute ambrosia.

Napoleon seems still chief idol here; we quitted the town by the Porte Napoléon,—name in gilt letters over the gate, 'Café Napoléon' and 'Napoléon' on a sign-board, just by. Posthumous honours are often an interested homage to the successor: here they are offered to a tree dead down to its very roots, the only scion withered on its young

stalk, all passed away but the life that lives in deeds, or in the fainter register of memory.

Improvements do not run upon wheels here, but come tugging on at a heavy footpace, stopping to take breath at every three steps. There are ploughs that look as if they came down from Charlemagne, or his father Pepin, and so do some other things. The provincial French are (it is said) still disposed to resist new systems; and old prejudices,—religious, political, or of habit, in many places keep out *the schoolmaster*. A friend of mine asked a French lady of rank some questions relative to the state of morals in her part of the country; to which she replied most favourably, giving her tenantry the credit of being the best people in the whole department,—pious, virtuous, honest, neighbourly; and winding all up with "Ah, monsieur, ils ne savent pas lire."

Touching the schoolmaster: violent changes are always violently opposed, even gradual ones are watched suspiciously, and seldom pass in wholly unobserved, even through the narrow postern; while at the great gate there are watchers who see them even in the dark, and straightway blow

the horn, though often too late to prevent their entry. In politics, in morals, as in manners, we get used to old abuses, as we do to old maladies of long standing; but new laws, new systems, and new diseases frighten us. We know the extent of the standing evil, but not the whole resources of the remedy; and remembering that all changes bring difficulties with them, are apt to forget how often those very difficulties wear down into permanent advantages.

In no country perhaps in the world, is there more rural beauty of the simple and endearing kind than in our own, nor does any other promise sweeter pictures of household loveliness; but the poetry of ignorance, such as it still exists in the neighbourhood of Madame de B——, has passed away from our cottages, and the prose of dissipated poverty has, I fear in many instances, come in its stead. The march of the schoolmaster will be indeed a blessing, if by strengthening the moral feeling, opening new sources of happiness, inspiring a desire of knowledge, awakening a disgust of vice, it may counteract the attractions of the ale-house, or mitigate the horrors of the factory.

This is an entirely practical age: we no longer

apply the doctrines of speculative philosophy to the state of society and morals, but coldly silence illusions with one broad question, "Of what use are they?" Doubts are now become doctrines, the vague changes to the palpable: Enthusiasm gathers up her robe for flight, and Poetry, who cannot live without her, sails off to bear her company. The movement of mind, propelled by the general diffusion of useful knowledge, will in time become mechanically rapid, like the movement of a steam engine: we shall discard the poetical swathings of life, break up the painted case which conceals the real object from our eyes, and come straight at the core, as an antiquarian does at the fibres of his mummy. Talent will in all classes find its means of developement, its sphere of action: there will be less ignorance, but more mediocrity, opener means and fairer play: the higher cast of mind will always and in all situations rise, like water, to a level with its source; but those whose faculties are merely imitative, no longer sustained by the feeling of superiority which instruction derives from the presence of ignorance, overtaken by those whom they had before despised but whom education has raised to their standard, outrun by supe-

rior intelligence,—now for the first time finding tongue, will cease to usurp the high seat, and must be content to share the common bench with others. For the glory of the new system is its principle of justice; it lays the road to honourable distinction open to all mankind, and by affording the means of improvement, facilitates,—or rather bestows, the power of action. The privileged will no longer plunge alone into the waters of knowledge, and then shutting up the flood-gates, turn that into a pool which ought to be a common stream; but mingling with those who have hitherto been barred out from a community of benefit, make general cause with them for the wise and noble purpose of general advancement.

Whether the benefits of instruction equally diffused, through the medium of a judicious and enlightened system of national education, be or be not likely to conduce to the happiness of mankind, remains a doubt with many, and if mankind were still in the poet's age of golden ignorance, it might be one with more; though the principle of equity is so strongly and undeniably in its favour, that the opposition of wise and virtuous men to those whose enlightened views would turn the restlessness

of thought into beneficial channels, and strengthen into wholesome exercise the moral and intellectual faculties, must ever seem a paradox. The people know too much to be safely, or honestly, kept out from the knowledge of more. In our land of England the question of national education has been so long and so openly debated, that scarcely one among the class which it especially concerns is entirely uninformed of its existence; and partial information refuses to accept what ignorance takes thankfully. The people have heard their capabilities of improvement, their fittingness for higher things, canvassed fully; and if the desire of obtaining instruction as a means of fortifying the mind, quickening the faculty of virtuous enjoyment, or teaching ingenuity to give due direction and full effect to labour, be often but faintly felt, ambition is sure to be awakened; and the love of distinction (in one shape or other the main-spring of so many minds) being put on the alert, cannot again be subdued into acquiescence in a system that curtails or destroys its chances. Thus acted on, a strong mind grows rebellious under a sense of injustice; a weak one worthless under the misapprehensions of ignorance. It may be that some

few are rendered unhappy by having received an education which has served to open their eyes to the disadvantages of their social position, without perhaps enduing them with sufficient strength to combat those disadvantages, or sufficient philosophy to rise above them. There may be others, too, whose feelings have from the same cause been refined into a sensitiveness that, when awakened, becomes the source of continual anguish and deep-rooted misanthropy; to such, ignorance may be happiness, though to others the source of eternal regret. But in all great questions, the principle of common justice and general good should be the governing one; and the aid which man in an influential position owes to his fellow men who are in a dependant one, and which so mainly tends to the developement of moral and mental character, should not be considered as less incumbent, because it may be sometimes unavailable.

CHAPTER XVII.

LA BEGUDE — PEZENAS — MOLIERE — MEZE — THE BEST THING THERE — MONTPELLIER — MUSEE FABRE — CLIMATE, ETC. — AQUEDUCTS — LA PEYROU — AN EXTENSIVE VIEW — THE BISHOP'S VILLA — DEBIT DE VACHE — HOTEL DU MIDI — THE AIR OF MONTPELLIER.

ENVIED the post-master of La Begude his fountain, his shade, and his garden with its beautiful hedge of roses. Changed horses at Pezenas, where Molière, then the director of a strolling company, is said to have composed some of his earliest dramatic pieces.

In those days, the barber's shop served the purpose of the more modern coffee-house, and the chair in which this great man sat habitually, when he indulged his gossiping vein (what a delightful one it must have been!) at the favoured Figaro's of the day, is still preserved here, and honoured as Ariosto's is at Ferrara. The possessor of this precious relic, a gentleman of the town, allows it to be seen and sat in by the curious; at least so

we are told. Good houses, and of course walks: every town in France has its public walk; when I say *every*, I do not mean that *almost* should be *sous entendu*, for I cannot at this moment recollect any that does not possess this embellishment, except Montmorency; which, having the forest at its door, would probably disdain the double rows of limes or sycamore, the boulevard promenade which in other places is gratefully accepted as a succedaneum.

But it does not follow that because there are trees there should be shade also: here that luxury must be hunted for in some dark corner; for though the leaves are not yet fallen, they are so crisped, that the sunbeams come down through them boldly, lighting up the ground all round: Herne's oak, were it here, would cast no better shadow than Peter Schlemil. What a fine thing it is to be able to wrangle with the sun on the sixteenth of October! At Mèze, a very pretty woman benevolently placed herself on a bench opposite to our carriage, and while we waited for horses, suffered us to admire a countenance full of charm, with a certain finesse of expression at once gay, well bred, and perfectly innocent,—what the French call a *jolie figure de fantaisie;* it was a

pleasure to find it there, rose-budding among so many wall-flower visages.

The next pleasant thing that we met with was the sea, or rather a branch of it,—the port of Mèze, I believe, but it did not fill my mind: I wanted the wide expanse, the indented shore, the distant sail, the blue line of the horizon, and the land of imagination beyond it. The bay is solitary,—so far, so good; and has one or two fishing-villages (or it may be towns) within it,—houses, churches, and all, clinging together like a cluster of filberts; very brown and desolate, yet picturesque, like a nest of sea-side hovels in Italy. Calcined rocks, and the earth sometimes of a bright red, emulating the vigorous tinting of a young lady's first effort in the landscape line.

Wide levels occasionally varied by gentle swells; vines dove-tailed with grain; almonds and quinces making hedges, and with no better effect at this season than osiers and crab-apples. There is no individualizing such scenery; the country houses have shade about them, and look pretty; but nothing throws itself into picture.

We are now at Montpellier, where we arrived an hour after dark: had we turned off to see the nine

falls of the great canal, as we had some idea of doing, we should not have got here till midnight. Found all sorts of comforts at the Hôtel du Midi; and dinner (an excellent one) ready in ten minutes.

I should think that Montpellier, from what I have seen of it this morning, must have more dust in it than any town in Europe. When the air is still, it lies in beds on the pavement; if there is a light wind, it springs up and envelopes every thing. The houses are white, the trees are white; the ground dazzles as if it were covered with snow, and if a dog runs by, a white cloud is sure to run after it. And then the glare! a town built of fine white stone sounds grandly, but the glare of Montpellier makes one regret bricks as if they were verdure. It is not here that one can, like the 'petit Lapin' of La Fontaine,

> "Faire à l'Aurore sa cour,
> Parmi le thym, et la rosée;"

every thing dies of thirst; four whole months without a drop of rain. Other skies may bring other aspects, and by and by there may be moisture even here—perhaps mud; who knows?

Some reparations at the Musée Fabre, so we did not see it. The pictures are a donation from the

gentleman whose name it bears; he was himself an artist, and is presumed to have succeeded Alfieri in the good graces of the Countess d'Albany, who, some say, married him; at all events she manifested her attachment by the bequest of her pictures, &c. The collection has a high name; whether a merited one, I cannot say. A picture gallery is often the most fatiguing and least profitable of all exhibitions, and as often the most delightful; sometimes torturing the nerves, sometimes soothing them with those deeply-felt images of beauty, those exquisite illusions in which the eye sees motion, while the ear listens for sound. Who has not found the silence of noon in the landscapes of Claude? or heard the pipe of the shepherd in the valleys of Poussin? Have we not all talked with pictures? felt, sorrowed, rejoiced, —and more—remembered with them?

A few drops of rain this morning, just enough to mark the dust, but not to sink into it; and now the sun is shining out again. The mornings and evenings are, however, often cold enough to make a fire pleasant. It is true, we are at the north side of the street; if we were at the south, we should broil. Every thing in this climate of sharp wind

and blazing sun, depends on the aspect in which one happens to be placed,—in winter, a sunny chamber may have a green-house atmosphere; but, crossing streets and turning corners must be trying work to invalids. Fuel is brought to Montpellier from a considerable distance, and is proportionably dear; all other things, both of luxury or necessity, exceedingly cheap,—(authority, our host). The famous Roquefort—the only really good French cheese, is made at a place a few leagues off: it resembles our Stilton, and though inferior to it, is often excellent. Very good strawberries at breakfast: all rare and delicate things are to be found here, but where the abundance comes from one is at a loss to find out, for every foot of land seems given up to the vine and the olive. It is a highly cultivated and fruitful country, but it must be a practised eye that can discover the riches of the soil through the coat of dust that hardens on it, and spreads its chalky uniform tone over the whole country.

Made a round of sights, beginning with the Peyrou, a very fine '*Place*,' terminated by a temple, and planted at each side with several rows of trees. The whole has a gorgeous Versailles

effect, and commands a magnificent view. In front of the entrance is one of the town gates; it is handsome, and quite in keeping with the Peyrou, which belongs altogether to the time and taste of Louis the Fourteenth. Behind the building is a modern aqueduct, stretching over a surface agreeably varied, and giving something of a Roman air to a scene in itself beautifully southern. By means of this aqueduct, the town is abundantly provided with water; the temple receives part of its wealth within its reservoir, another reservoir at its base is also amply supplied: there are jets d'eau too, but less lavishly fed, and other depôts under the aquatic temple, from which various quarters of the town are furnished with this household blessing. Visited the underground naïads, and then returned to look again at the aqueduct.

There is something in the form of an aqueduct that, independent of its utility, pleases one greatly. I love its aërial yet massive stretch, its solid lightness, its open arches rising one above another that let in the sky and the distance,—sometimes rough bits of admirable tinting, that become picture by the help of the arched framing, or quiet garden scenes that bud and bloom, wither and revive,

beside its time-defying strength. Every thing looks well through an arch; it is one of the inventions of architecture most generally pleasing to the eye, and one feels surprised, when admiring its graceful boldness, that Greek taste did not discover, or having discovered, did not employ, so useful and so beautiful a form. The recollections, too, that are awakened by the sight of an aqueduct are so full of thought; looking on it, we remember the great works of the Romans, the broken arches of the Campagna, the solitary fragments of the marshes of Miturnus, and those rich remains garlanded with the wild vegetation that loves to luxuriate amidst ruins, making decay seem beautiful, and whose fine moral lesson meets the eye in every chapter of old Italy. This aqueduct is a pleasing object, but more a hint to memory than a call on admiration.

A magnificent panoramic view from La Peyrou. The blue Mediterranean is there, the bay of Cette, the mountains of the Cevennes, and those of Roussillon and the high Pyrenees. I cannot boast of having seen my dear old friends,—there were too many clouds between us; but when the atmosphere is clear, so are they, and beautifully visible.

The Cevennes form a nearer feature, and recall those sad times of religious warfare when their woods and caverns afforded shelter to the Protestants, then, as anciently, the objects of bitter persecution. Preaching, prophesying, they descended from their mountains, at first ill-armed and few in number; then gathering strength, wreaked terrible vengeance on their oppressors, and under the well-known name of Camisards, maintained their ground for ten years against the armies of France and the terrors of the church.

Country beneath the eye free, rich, and varied; gentle swells studded with villas, with low woods about them,—very pretty at a distance, which is as much as can usually be said for French country-houses; there are *exceptions*, and they grow every day more numerous, but they are only exceptions: the raw, the neglected, or the ill-arranged, are still *the rule*. All the trees green here except the lime, and a few other short-lived ones; and the tall cypress, lifting up its eastern head amidst the soft foliage of the acacia and other summer trees, is effective and beautiful.*

* We have since passed an evening,—it was in the month of June,—on the Peyrou, seated on the parapet that fences

The guardian of the waters, who acted as our cicerone, assured us gravely that three parts of the world were to be seen from the Peyrou,—'the Alps,' and he pointed to the sky, 'the Pyrenees, and the sea.' Having thus divided the globe, he condescended to details,—"There, (said he,) behind that mountain, which is called Le Pied de Salut, lies Paris."

"Where?" I exclaimed.

"Why, just behind the hill," he replied impa-

the elevated terrace behind the water-temple. I shall never forget the beauty of the setting sun, or the amber sky that remained, in spite of the gathering twilight, for one whole hour behind it. The earth, too, was in its hour of loveliness; the pleasant country passing from light to shadow, a faint shine lingering longest on the distant line of sea, and the fair gardens spread out below, with their broad courtly walks fringed with flower-knots or dark trees, with groupes taking ices or the sweet nectars of the south under their shade. Gay ladies were there in rainbow garments, listening to their earnest cavaliers, or sympathizing with their silent ones; pretty children bo-peeping in the alleys, and the sweet lights making Boccaccio groupes of what might in broad sunshine have seemed of more every-day fashion. I have seldom seen any thing so charming. At this same season the pomegranate hedges, being in bloom, are exceedingly beautiful, and very pleasant country places may be found in the neighbourhood of Montpellier.

tiently, as if he had been pointing out Poynings from the Devil's Dyke.

This Pied de Salut,—or as another man called it, Puy de Salut, proved to be, according to the vehement testimony of a boy who appeared eminently skilled in the local,—Le Pic de St. Loup. How difficult it is to ascertain a name or a distance, even when we are within sound of the one or sight of the other.

I am not in love with Montpellier; the town is dull, or seems so, the streets, lanes, and all the good things grafted into its skirts; this is the fashion of the south, where widening, opening, throwing down, or building up, are things never thought of in the close interiors. The old inconveniences always remain, contrasted rather than united with the magnificence of the modern additions. One part is pieced out of its historical gloom and legendary interest by the other, which borders it round with a show of splendour that turns its dusky hues into mean ones. Saw the outside of the College of Physicians, founded in 1180 by William Count of Montpellier; who, having invited to his court certain Arabian doctors profoundly versed in the science of medicine, laid the

foundation of that celebrity which still attends both the schools and professors of this learned city. Drove to the botanical garden, where the grave of poor Narcissa—or at least the spot which passes for it, is still shown. I had it all before me,—the melancholy night-scene, the earth opened in the dead hour, the young corpse let down into it stealthily, and the muffled mourner stifling the father's sorrow in the ministry of the priest. But we could find no one to point it out; so we returned to the carriage, and giving ourselves up to our coachman's guidance, were soon landed at the country residence of the bishop. Sphinxes at the gate, and the seasons, hacked in stone and painted a blue white, in the garden; besides various other decorations,—as box hedges, round trees skilfully tonsured, screw trees artfully twisted, starved oranges in vases of green and yellow pottery, and a *parc*—as they called it, into which the gardener would fain have lured us; there were alleys (he said) and a basin, but we resisted the temptation. Such things, though pleasant in their summer liveries, do not become the yellow leaf;—the sear carpeting and oozing litter of autumn scandalize trim walks: very well for the forest, which has no gardener but the wind, or for odd bodies like my-

self, who love, or have loved,—O, the past tense!—to force their way through the holly bushes ankle deep in dead leaves, listening to their rustle as if it were soft music, and inhaling with delight the odour of damp earth and decaying vegetation. But wherever the shears or the roller is the directing providence, such things are mere litter, and look as out of place as a draggled plume would in the neat bonnet of a quaker.

I have heard it said, that where there is nothing else, oddity has its merit,—as in the porch of the cathedral, whose shelly roof, supported by two solid round towers with conical caps, looks like something built up with the bricks of old Babel. Drove round the esplanade; a fine mall with good views in its neighbourhood, and some shade, but no trees of any magnitude.

With us the animal and its flesh (when used as food) have in general different names; as, cow, beef; calf, veal; sheep, mutton; pig, pork: in France usually the same, as bœuf, bœuf; mouton, mouton; veau, veau Here we have 'Débit de Vâche' over the small butchers' shops,—a slice of cow! How strong is the force of habit,—the very sound is sickening; while a beefsteak conveys no other idea than that of comfort, imaged under the

form of a snug fire, an *appétissant* dish, oyster sauce, and family faces.

Impossible to quit Montpellier without saying something of the Hôtel du Midi, which is perfect in comfort, cleanliness, and all that constitutes an excellent inn. The proprietor has been a courier. I have remarked in Italy, that whenever an hotel is particularly good, the master is invariably a *ci-devant* courier; usually an active intelligent person, accustomed to cater for a variety of fancies, conversant with the customs, comforts, and advantages of many countries, and seldom forgetting to provide his house with whatever used to please Milor, or keep Miladi in good humour.

The air of Montpellier is no longer in vogue; it is discovered to be too sharp and variable for chest complaints, and must, if all now said of it be true, have killed its thousands. Formerly all consumptive cases were despatched to Montpellier; every hot garden walk was called Montpellier; every sunny suburb had its Montpellier-row, and Montpellier itself was converted into an English colony. But now all those who do not go on to Nice or Pisa, stop at Hyeres, where the mistral (they say) is never felt.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LUNEL—NISMES—THE AMPHITHEATRE—A LOOK TOWARDS BEAUCAIRE — MAISON CARREE — ITS VICISSITUDES — FOUNTAIN AND BATHS — TEMPLE OF DIANA — EFFECT OF RUINS ON THE MIND — LA TOUR MAGNE — NISMES, ITS GENERAL EFFECT—ANTIQUITIES—INEFFICIENCY OF WORDS—PRODUCE, INNS, ETC., OF THE SOUTH—PONT DU GARD—ITS POSITION.

THE country from Montpellier to Nismes is sometimes of a more agreeable character than the general run of that to which we have been lately accustomed. The houses have plantations about them, and occasionally sizeable trees, with now and then a superb fir, clothed in the spreading beauty of the cedar. Not a waste inch—all vines and olives, and the latter laden with fruit; fig-trees scrambling in the hedges, but not very fine ones; nothing of the breadth and richness which they attain at Genoa, and in other parts of Italy. A close population; towns and villages bleaching to the right and to the left; at Colombier, Lunel and Tokay

were pressed upon us, but when we arrived at Lunel itself, we seemed to enter into the very domain of Bacchus,—the sound of cooperage, the sight of casks filling the streets, and the strong vinous odour—every thing, in short, announced the neighbourhood of the 'muscat adorable.' A woman rushed out upon us with a sample bottle; but we resisted, contenting ourselves with grapes, which we found solid and fleshy, like the jar grapes that we get from Portugal.

Lunel was (according to tradition) colonized in the tenth century by Jews; learned men, who taught publicly in the synagogue. The son of Semele seems to be now high priest, and the golden bell and the pomegranate, the twined linen and cunning work of the ephod, have made way for the thyrsis and the vine-wreath.

There are no fences here, nothing to prevent the hungry vagrant from participating in nature's bounty; both grapes and olives may be gathered by any one who passes. This confidence indicates a respect for property highly creditable to national character; in many (indeed most) parts of France, orchards, vineyards, and kitchen-gardens are unfenced, and yet it is rare to hear of their being pilfered.

Magnificent mules, and tricked out with tassels of red and blue like a lady's hawking palfrey; far finer—that is showier, than the women, who wear gipsy hats of black beaver, and when young, look in them like Bunbury's country girls.

Asked a man to day how the people were disposed towards the new dynasty. "Some well, some ill," he said; and added, that for himself he knew what revolutions were; he had seen more than one, and could say, that though the first tug was hard work, those who came afterwards were gainers. According to his idea, the first stirrers of revolutionary action are like the angel who came to the pool of Bethesda and troubled its waters; but the next who went down found healing. Whether the medicine be in the mud or in the mind, it must be worked up until the healthy particles, detached from the dross, rise to the surface and diffuse their benefits.

We entered Nismes by an ignoble suburb, and came at once upon the amphitheatre. I was as much surprised as if I had never heard of it, and infinitely more pleased than I should have been had I approached it through an avenue of ceremonies. It is a grand and beautiful relic, soberly

and richly coloured; but the inevitable repairs, though done after the old pattern, are sometimes a drawback on the unity of effect. The interior has a look of fresh rubbish about it, of recent reparation, a vexatious air of completeness: when such things are mutilated by the hand of time, we wish them perfect, that an image of the past might be presented, as it were livingly, to our minds; but we desire to see their antique forms preserved—not restored. And when new bricks, fresh mortar, and stone just hewn, speak to us in a modern tongue, we wish again for the old rents and gaps that tally with the past,—the stains and notches of ages, leisurely impressed and bearing record.

The repairs are neither gilt or lettered; we find no pope's name, or king's, with a *munificentia* at the end of it; they are as inoffensive as such things can be, and were (it is said) indispensable to the preservation of the building. But still there is pieceing;—"the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

We ascended to the highest range of seats, and looked down into the crater of the circus. A goat hung among some high fragments, stretching out

its neck to crop the leaves of a fig-tree that grew out through a fissure in the wall above. It should have been the only tenant of the spot, but it had others not so much in character with its antique and decaying beauty; troopers and matrosses figured in the arena, now appropriated to military purposes, and encumbered by field-pieces and artillery waggons. A few years ago, huts and even houses occupied its space, and three thousand persons found an asylum within the old walls; but the colony was routed, and bull fights—greatly frequented (our guide tells us) by the ladies of Nismes, restored it as nearly to its ancient and ferocious uses as modern manners admitted of.*

From our post at the top of the arena, we overlooked the country towards Beaucaire and the mountains of Arles,—Beaucaire famous for its annual fair, and Arles where the Romans reigned by consuls, and the Goths by kings. It had kings of its own afterwards,—Counts of Provence, who

* At a later visit to Nismes, we found part of the arena screened in with tattered tapestry, benches and old chairs arranged in rows, and every thing prepared for the representation of "La Mort de La Tour d'Auvergne, premier Grenadier de la France," to be enacted by a company of strollers.

made themselves so; and was the cradle of the langue d'Oc, or Romane Provençale, under King Bozon in the ninth century. It is further and still more worthily honoured by being one of the first towns in France converted to Christianity, and is remarkable as affording an apparently inexhaustible field of interest to the antiquarian. Many of its unearthed treasures decorate the royal museums, and various remains of its Roman times still exist in the town, which is by some believed to possess the dust of the illustrious Roland, conveyed there, by order of Charlemagne, after the battle of Roncevaux. The beauty of the women of Arles is celebrated throughout the country; but the dead and the living are null to us, for there stands the cholera, like the angel of the flaming sword, blocking up all entrance.

Behind our reconnoitring post, rises a wooded hill crowned by a tower,—La Tour Magne, of antique and somewhat barbarous aspect. It is a Roman relic, and supposed to have been anciently a light-house; but its shapeless and ragged mass does not help conjecture.

The antients were fortunate, not only in the beauty and splendour of their conceptions, but

also in the durability of their materials, their everlasting granites, marbles, and porphyries; the most solid works of modern art seem but theatrical decorations compared with the modelled quarries of antiquity. I know of nothing so beautiful as the Maison Carrée, nor—though now discovered to be only a fragment of some building of mightier dimensions—temple, forum, or basilica,—any which presents (at least to the unlearned eye) a more exquisite and perfect whole. Its completeness seems one of its most striking characteristics, and left me but one wish; and that was to remove the wall in which the columns are imbedded, it seems so like something modern built up to preserve the structure. It is not so; but even with its excuse of antiquity, still it repulses the imagination, which delights in the classical dignity and withdrawing lines of the open colonnade. But what grace, beauty, and harmony of proportion,—what decorative richness and delicacy! Here one need not study, one need only feel: a child could scarcely look at it without delight. Louis the Fourteenth would fain have transported it stone by stone from its own Roman Nismes to the park at Versailles, where in the midst of clipped trees, manufactured

water, and modern gorgeousness, it would have either sunk into a court theatre, or standing aloof from its humiliated companions, have reduced their big-wig dignity to the dimensions of a plain bob. Luckily the thing was not feasible, so the temples and rotundas of the marble garden still keep their cold pre-eminence.

In the various vicissitudes of the Maison Carrée, from its first and long uncertain destination * through the different phases of church, town-hall, stable, granary, &c., it has suffered more from the barbarism of man, than even from the corrodings of time. It is now a museum, in which are contained various small bronzes and other antiquities discovered in the vicinity of Nismes, and a large filling up of modern efforts. I should rather have seen it unmodernised, without the gilt letters over the door, or the great brown door itself,—a spec-

* It is, however, generally believed, upon the authority of an inscription explained by Monsieur de Séguier, from a careful examination of certain holes visible in the architrave, and which had evidently been made by the cramps by which bronze letters (some traces of which still remain) had been fixed in the walls, to have been a temple erected in honour of Caius and Lucius Cæsar, grandsons of Augustus.

tator of the present, yet too entirely belonging to the past to be an actor in it. However, when we think that horses have been stabled here, forage stacked up, and the bustle of a town-hall outraged its chaste silence,—that, in short, it seems fated to be utilized, its present may be of its various appropriations the most consistent; nor could a better perhaps have been suggested, unless indeed it had been preserved for the higher purpose of prayer, for which its character of elevated simplicity seems to have designed it.

The celebrated fountain, its basins and baths, partly antique and partly restored after the ancient plan of the Roman baths which occupied the same site, are enclosed within a garden, beautiful from its shade and freshness, which reposes in the hollo of a hill planted with evergreens to its summit, and forming a permanent decoration of the most pleasing kind in a country, where the foliage of summer must soon become parched and yellow. The source of this fountain is in a rock at the foot of the hill, and its abundant and beautifully clear waters, after having filled two large reservoirs, are conveyed through a handsome canal, planted at each side with trees, into various parts of the city.

In the principal bath, the Roman pavement still remains; and very near to a limpid basin with a living floor of emerald weeds, but not (as they say) on its brink, are the remains of a temple supposed to have been dedicated to the worship of Diana; but whether in her most accredited character, or in that of Hecate or Luna, antiquarians have not yet decided.

I must confess that it is a little too far gone for me; but I thought the wild vegetation that prospers amidst the ruins beautiful, and am afraid was as much pleased with the fig-trees as with the temple, though it was from its helping tints and strong relief that they perhaps derived their charm. After all, considering the good intentions of Charles Martel, and the previous civilities of Franks and Goths, the wonder is,—not that the Roman monuments of Nismes should be something the worse for wear, but that they should be still perfect enough to excite the warm admiration of all who behold them. Perhaps, were these memorials of the past more perfect, we should find them less impressive. The decomposition of the solid temple, raised with masses hewn out of the marble quarry or the granite rock, is slow as the footstep

of time; and as decay steals upon it, we are reconciled by its mellowing beauty to the gradual rubbing out of those hardy lines and firm contours, which seemed to promise eternal duration. Might is force in action, strength is force in endurance—and in action too; both were combined in these amazing monuments in the highest degree of perfection of which the capacity of man, or the material of nature, is capable: and as the last yields slowly to the impression of ages, the mind builds up another temple on the ruins,—if not with the perfectness of its first elevation, yet with the strong help of memory, and the working hand of time, which makes breaches as if for the pleasure of niching thought within them, and mildews freshness as if to prepare a ground for the exquisite colouring which steals upon it from his palette.

Such decay is beauty, grandeur, solemnity: it is more; it is, or breeds, contemplation,—and wonder too, which being ignorance, works upwards and makes itself wisdom. But decay in the common objects of homely interest is entirely melancholy; the town mouldering into a village, the house crumbling into a hut, have no illusions to charm or elevate, and its aspect in the every day

garment of want and misery, growing hourly more rent and threadbare, ceases to be picture when it becomes pain, as the sight of actual decadency always does, dress it up how we may.

A winding walk of easy ascent, and in good order, carried us through shrubberies and groves of evergreens to a terrace midway up the semicircular hill: this terrace must be delicious in winter, always verdant, sheltered, and if there be but a ray of sunshine, sure of drawing it into its bosom. A charming view; the garden fore-ground with its fountain and its foliage, the encircling hills, the eastern cypress looking up and imaging eternity, the ruins crumbling earthwards and depicting time. We ascended to the Tour Magne,* which being now used as a telegraph, is no longer open to strangers. A man, apparently on duty, who sat on a stone with a hopeless, dismal face, as if he had watched from the palace roof at Argos for the whole ten years—all but one day, without catching a glimpse of the beacon fire, forbade our approach. So we looked at the view—greatly

* One of the towers of the Roman walls which enclosed Nismes, and probably so called from being the largest, and appropriated to some distinct purpose.

talked of, but we thought of more extent than beauty,—nothing to the look from the sunny terrace in the hollow of the evergreen hill; but the sun glared, and when it does, certain views seem sometimes bleached and stony, that in the light of evening, or the red dawn, are full of charm. Some broken eminences, covered with vineyards and olive gardens with a villa dotted here and there, screened the descent from the Tour Magne: they are in a warm, pleasing tone, and form one of the most agreeable bits of the picture.

As we quitted the gardens, two persons passed us followed by a crowd of idlers, who seemed attracted by the singularity of their costume. We inquired who they were; one said Poles, another Greeks, a third Egyptians. A man near me, happy to bolt out a high-sounding word, as the schoolmaster of whom Erasmus makes mention when he lighted on an old one, exclaimed "Zoroasters!" But they proved to be St. Simonians, and there they stood hemmed in and obviously gratified by the curiosity of the populace, who seemed to consider them as amusing mummers. Nothing could be more ludicrous than the air of benign importance with which they turned to the right

and to the left, as if to exhibit (according to the fashion of their Father Enfantin) *la puissance d'un regard;* or the insufferable self-complacency with which they looked down, like itinerant tooth-drawers, on the congregated rabble.

Like most of the large towns in Languedoc, Nismes announces itself speciously; with broad boulevards, fine public buildings, handsome houses, and all the apparel of a capital. Its magnificent monuments are all in what may be called the suburbs, meeting you at the turn of a corner as if they were every day objects; but the actual old town is here, as at Carcassonne, Narbonne, &c., a nest of narrow streets, little more than depôts for merchandise; with here and there a large house in a court, or, if there be a space or an angle wide enough to hold it, a préfecture or an episcopal palace, with three or four old-fashioned mansions sticking close to it. The Roman remains, which render Nismes particularly interesting, are all so placed, that the eye of the spectator easily removes itself to a favourable distance, from which it takes in the whole of its object in one unfrittered view. The mean houses which formerly shouldered the Maison Carrée, have all been swept away, and a

spacious area, enclosed by iron railing, separates this beautiful relic of the past from the surrounding buildings. The amphitheatre, too, is handsomely isolated, and from the wide space in which it stands, its full effect is received at once; while the temple of Diana becomes its shade, its quiet, and its fountains, as the grotto of Egeria does its silent valley.

Few things unlock the springs of thought so rapidly as those fine records of the far-off past, which still stand amongst us like the spectres of the hallowed dead, that rose up and went abroad into the streets bearing witness. History is thus told by signs more expressive than words: we not only hear of the Romans, but we see their works; their magnificent conceptions and prodigious means of execution, their luxury, refinement, grandeur, and cruelty, are all brought before us in a single frame. The lofty splendour of their public edifices, and the record graven on them of their sometimes barbarous, sometimes noble uses, remain as witnesses, not only of their minds and means, but of their tastes and habits. No written history can bring before us the Romans and their times as do these monuments; here are structures raised by

their hands, altars at which they have knelt, seats on which they have reposed ; their power and their purposes are kept alive in their works—brought palpably before us, while history seems but the clothing of tradition.

I once heard a person say, "I don't believe a word of *Macbeth:* were I to go to Scotland and to see Dunsinane, perhaps I might—witches and all; but not till then." And yet who ever knew the power of words as Shakspeare did? who like him could coin them into images? In his hands words find their real uses; they embody thought, create ideas, quicken memory, charm, elevate, touch, inspire, and playing on the strings of the passions, strike out that sympathetic tone which understands and answers to their language. And yet this person, whose imagination remained unaffected by the force of words so wielded, was convertible by the palpability of stone and mortar.

Left Nismes this morning,—a holiday, and the grisettes all afloat in their gayest gowns and prettiest ribbons. The people here look cheerful and industrious, and seeing them so, with their pleasant walks, and green gardens, and sunny world about them, one wishes to forget—but cannot

always,—the horrors of the Cours Neuf and the Chemin de Montpellier, in the terrible reaction of 1815. These southern spirits that fly along enjoyingly, are fearful ones when excited; the old barbed dagger of religious animosity is always here,—hidden sometimes, but ready to unsheath itself at the first blood-cry. I knew a man who, speaking of his enemy, used to say, "I hate him religiously—and that's the worst kind of hatred."

Figs, almonds, prunes, olives, quinces, and excellent wines, make part of the commerce of Languedoc; *boutargue*, the roe of the sturgeon pressed into a paste, is another article of trade; mulberries are cultivated, and the shuttle plied in the cottages. Montpellier has a kind of fame for its essences, its verdigris, and its cream of tartar; Narbonne for its cloths, Nismes for its silks. Le vin de Tavel, current in the hotels of Switzerland, is a wine of this country. I have already spoken of the Muscat and Tokay of Lunel, but I had forgotten the Blanquette de Limous, which is sold at ten or twelve sous the bottle, and may (as they tell us) be easily passed off for Champagne.

Good inns in the south,—Hôtel de Luxembourg appeared so to us even after the capital one of Mont-

pellier. An improving country; still vines and olives, but the general foliage more varied, more mixed up of many things; mulberries in great abundance, and farther on the ilex, spreading its sober shade over the hills. Stopped at La Foux to look at a suspension-bridge over the Gardou, which appears now as if a child could wade it: the bridge is a very elegant ornament and, I suppose, of great utility. Fell in with some familiar trees, very recreative to the home-loving fancy after such leagues upon leagues of vines and olives. They were like the gooseberry-bush to that household spirit, who, banished to some paradise of the tropics, some Eden of guavas and ananas, sickened at the surrounding luxuries; but stumbling by chance upon the old green bush, felt his heart leap within him, and fancied the taste of its poor fruit had love and friendship in it.

When Anson saw in the island of Tinian meadows covered with the common garniture of English fields, and white bulls cropping the butter-cups and trefoil, while the crowing of cocks completing the illusion made him almost fancy himself in England, how his heart must have leaped within him. But the Pont du Gard! the real one!—

the grand and simple Roman aqueduct, with the mellow colouring of almost nineteen centuries glowing on it! I am not fond of lavishing notes of admiration, and never care to use them but when the heart and pen go together; but this merits more than two—more than twenty. How magically it came upon us, suspended as it seemed in the air, and stretching like a phantom from rock to rock, with the blue heavens and the green earth looking in through its wide arches.

Quitting the carriage before we arrived at the aqueduct, we saw from a favourable distance its three rows of arches, hanging one above another until they overtopped the hills which form their side frames. The centre arches have a breadth, a lightness, an incomparable beauty, of which models and engravings can convey no idea. Through the lower ones the tufted wood, the silent glen, the lonely river, are seen in half shadow,—every thing around wears the character of profound repose; beyond, looking still forward through the arches, is the narrow valley, wild and still, through which the river creeps as if afraid to startle by its murmurs the genius of solitude who sleeps within its shade. Turning to look back, another part of the

same valley appears widening gradually into a broad distance, but still with the same character of loneliness, and the same silent river pouring its shrunk stream along a rocky strand, shaded by the broad branches of a few fine trees; above rises the close foliage of the ilex tufting the hills, and over all a sky in perfect harmony with the colouring of the landscape; a grey sky streaked with light clouds, warm and stationary.

Nothing can be imagined more perfect than the position of this exquisite monument. Drawn across a sylvan valley, finding its support in the wild hills on which its arches rest, not overpowered by the magnitude of surrounding objects, with no background to wall it up and shut out the heavens, not barely sharing admiration with the mighty works of nature, not rivalled—or distanced, by them; but having in its poetic solitude all that befits the character of its beauty, all that a contemplative mind or romantic fancy can desire.

CHAPTER XIX.

AVIGNON—COUP D'ŒIL — ETYMOLOGY — LA VILLE SONNANTE—ROCHER DE DON—OLD NAMES AND NEW—ASSOCIATIONS—LA MISERICORDE—GRAVE OF LAURA—THE MUSEUM — VAUCLUSE, ANOTHER TIME — ULTRA PLATONISM—THE CANON AND THE LADY—ROYAL RHYMES.

Rocky and wild towards Avignon, and only partially cultivated: dropped down amongst some oaks, and saw Mont Ventoux looking out of Dauphiné at us. Country more fertile and agreeable, and then again barrenness,—till at last we came suddenly upon the noble plain from which the castellated walls of Avignon rise up proudly.

The burst was fine, and we took it in a moment of great splendour, with the evening sun upon it—a moment when it was all glowing in a rich southern light, and were surprised and charmed. The city thus seen, has the appearance of a vast metropolis, with spires, towers, rocks, and battlements, which the eye mistakes at first for fortresses. The long wooden bridge over the Rhone has lost two

centre arches, swept away by the ice in the rigorous winter of 1829, and a temporary bridge of boats supplies its place; an old stone bridge with broken arches serves, like the battlements, for picture, though not for use, and another wooden one crosses a second branch of the river, which is at present on its good behaviour and agreeably demure, but tremendous in its angry moments. Avignon has its traditional etymology. A temple consecrated to Diana rose above the banks of the Rhone, and as the boatmen passed beneath it, they lifted up their voices to the divinity, crying "Ave Diana!" The goddess went out of fashion, but the words, which by a little corruption became Aveniane, and by a little more Avignon, have stuck to the spot.

An excellent inn (l'Hôtel de l'Europe) situated, as usual, rather on the outskirts of the town, but within the gates; opposite to it is the house in which General Le Brun was massacred by an infuriated populace; and not far distant the cathedral with its silver bell (that only tolls at the death of a Pope) and its tower of doleful recollections. Perhaps the same revolution that made the one a record of its crimes, melted down the other; how-

ever, if the siver bell no longer tolls, others do, and with sufficient vigour at this moment to entitle Avignon to the epithet of *la ville sonnante*, which Rabelais bestowed upon it.

To strengthen the impression which the fine and striking aspect of Avignon makes when first approached, and before the mean details of the close interior have effaced it, one should ascend the Rocher de Don, and look round on the noble and varied view which it commands. Below is the town enclosed within its beautiful battlements, and thickly set with the multitudinous spires and domes of its ancient religious edifices,—now in many instances turned to worldly purposes; beyond the walls, other structures appear amidst groves of southern verdure, and the eye easily converts them into temples, suiting them to the Italian atmosphere and character of the scene, though probably they are only village churches. The papal palace, now converted into a barrack and a prison, rises immediately before the eye, storied over with many memories, and flanking it the cathedral with its Roman cupola. On the opposite bank of the river is a ruined castle, looking like a fragment of the city though separated from it by the broad Rhone,

which, dividing itself into two branches, meanders through a fertile stretch of garden plains, and is lost amidst the hills that draw their circling screen round this beautiful and balmy region.

Mont Ventoux is the boldest feature of the chain, the rocks of Vaucluse the most interesting. The iris of love, and faith, and poetry, is on them; and while I looked upon their purpling heights, my fancy made out a spot in which it placed the town of Carpentras, where Petrarch, enamoured of study and pleased with the scenes which recalled the sweet season of his meditative childhood, consecrated his leisure to those labours, whose fruits procured for him in after time the blended wreath of poetry and learning.

There are some details in this charming view, that come out to eyes that search for them like the fibres of a leaf, which in the broad mass of foliage are passed over unheeded. Sometimes a light colonnade, a hanging terrace, or perhaps a tall pine orientalizes the distant buildings; the colouring of the houses is mellow, their roofs covered with the convex tile (*à dos d'âne*), which, when its tone is subdued by, time as it is here, has a very soft and pleasing effect,—there is no glare,

no red, but a sort of pale tint with a shade of rust on it, that when the sun shines, warms itself into beauty. Nothing so cold as the effect of a fine blue sky spread over hard and glaring objects; so far from drawing them up to its tone, they appear to grow colder under its influence; but in the south, the earth and skies seem to have a secret understanding, and hence the charm of the scenery. To one who loves as I do the old historical names of the French provinces, and disdains the convenient distribution of departments and their new appellations, this view has a particular charm: the old names are still the abiding ones; and while a man who pointed out some of its beauties to us mingled together the names of Provence, Languedoc, and Dauphiné, I thought how mean and poor the Var, and the Gard, and the Drôme sounded.

One cannot touch this soil, one cannot hear these fine old names pronounced without a sudden rush backwards of the mind into those times of poetry, romance, devotion, and chivalry, when the Counts of Provence influenced their people to the love and cultivation of the arts, making another Bagdad of their capital. These old names, whether they be of places or of people, have downright magic in

them. Alphonso, Count of Toulouse, and Raymond Beranger, Count de Provence, with their gently baptized wives Faydide and Douce, give you in the bare sound of their historical appellations whole quires of troubadour rhymes and chivalric records. I cannot bear disturbing an old name, unless it be a degraded one: Countess of Roussillon,—how well it sounds; make a river of her, a modern one, and Shakspeare could hardly keep her floating.

Perhaps this is carrying the matter a little too far; but there is infinite magic in a name, it so soon takes a character if there be one to take, and then lives and dies bound up with it.

There was no getting into the cathedral: we knocked at the great door, and then at the small one, as some respectable-looking persons standing by told us to do, but found no access. Its neighbour, the old papal palace, has now two distinct appropriations; barred windows at one side, and military trappings at another, explain its present uses. The associations connected with this palace are feeble compared with those encrusted into the walls of the Lateran or the Vatican; removed from the old seat of government, the Popes seem

to have left, not only the strength and individuality of power behind them, but to have stripped their state of that species of local and mechanical reverence which had so long sustained it.

Met, as we returned, a group of unfortunate Poles, standing about with the air of German students, and no doubt the sad hearts of exiles. Avignon has been assigned to them by government as a sort of frontier prison: they were received here (we are told) without sympathy; and yet their melancholy position might well excite, and their devoted patriotism justify it. The town is said to be eminently Carlist, resenting still the revolution of whose horrors it was the victim. Many of the churches and religious houses have been destroyed, and others appropriated to lay purposes; but there seems a plenitude of priests, as in all the southern towns of France.

At La Miséricorde (a hospital for the insane) a crucifix, carved in ivory * and of the most exquisite workmanship, was shown to us. It had been contemplated with admiration by Canova, and the sister who accompanied us repeated this with pride; a pride which though only relative, seemed from

* By Johannes Guillarmin, (1659).

its warmth to be personal. To these poor nuns the feminine feeling of vanity is interdicted, at least where they themselves are concerned, but it is not annihilated; the object is only changed,—transferred from the individual to the carved crucifix, the sculptured saint, the curtained picture, or the altar bouquet.

This hospital is under the care of nuns, sisters of charity, but subject to stricter rules than those by which the order is in general governed: these meritorious women undertake the entire superintendence of the lunatic patients, and perform their arduous task with admirable courage and tenderness. Our guide was a quiet spirit, full of pious humility, working purely for the love of God,—without thought of applause, or consciousness of merit. I asked her if she could quit the order if she pleased: she said not, but that the superior had the power of transferring any member of her community into any other hospital where her services might be wanted. They only went out (she added) to attend on the sick or the dying—it was their duty; they were here on earth to perform it. "If it was the plague, (said I, stupidly enough,) you would not be afraid?"—"What (she replied with

great simplicity) should I be afraid of? Not surely of going a little before my time."

We had some difficulty in finding out the grave of Laura, even after we had got into the garden of the Cordeliers, or what had once been so. At length we stumbled on a woman, who led the way into a damp corner, where we found something like a wretched sort of tea-house arbour, with a stout column in the middle of it, occupying nearly the whole of a spot scarcely large enough for one of those drawing-room shafts which usually support the delicate bust of a Muse or a Venus; indeed, we could barely make our way round it without getting entangled in the briars. An English *milor*, the woman told us, had given, or rather was to give, the column. This was the model; but it was to be executed in marble, with an urn on the top; and when it was placed, the briars were to be cleared away, and the spot, to use a vulgar but appropriate expression, tidy'd up.

Poor Laura! she no longer sleeps in this sloppy corner; her ashes were scattered by the Vandals of the revolution, and the place of her grave is unhonoured, except by strangers. Like that of the fair girl of Verona, whose tomb was, when we

saw it, placed like a water-trough under a spout in an open court, abandoned to the stray homage or conjectures of those who had learned her story from the poet of their hearts; and yet, when living, how they were loved! But poetical recollections are not kept holy here: we found La Santa Chiara turned into a baker's shop; and as we quitted the grave of Laura, some dyers, who were at work in an adjoining yard, smiled at us contemptuously. Madder has conquered poetry; it is the staple commodity of Avignon, and the trade of love has been abandoned for that of a dye stuff.

The Museum is in a sad litter; it is only *provisoire*, the porteress told us, which in France generally means *permanent*. This active functionary, porteress, guide, and puffer, would have made a splendid Diana: we admired her full-chiselled lips, and light eyes with long black eyelashes, and likewise her want of learning,—a great blessing, for cicerones are terrible people in general. As to the pictures, they are in such a wretched light, that there would have been some difficulty in making them out, even if it had been a bright day instead of a very murky evening. The Vernets, a family in which distinguished talent seems

hereditary, being natives of this town, (as our directing divinity informed us,) have the best places assigned to them. There are two rigid portraits of Petrarch and Laura; he a canon, but no lover—or poet either, and she as stiff as Catharine Bore.*

I think we saw nothing else at Avignon, except the boulevards and some very pretty women. The peasant girls wear a cap without a border, bound round the head with a broad ribbon—generally black, crossed behind, and tied in a large bow before; when smartly put on, it is rather becoming: in the towns the ribbon is discarded, and the white skull-cap worn, (but only by the females of the humbler classes,) with the strings flying. On Sundays the gay ones set off this pauper headdress with showy earrings and neck ornaments of gold; and thus embellished, look like the rustic madonnas of a country chapel, and quite as proud of their finery as the queen-cow of a Swiss herd is said to be of her huge bell.

We had reserved this morning for Vaucluse; but L—— has been a little indisposed for some days, and though he would willingly have gone

* Luther's wife.

with us out of kindness, yet we think it more prudent to get on to Marseilles, where, if necessary, we can procure good advice. It is mortifying to be so near that vale of sweet and limpid waters, and still more of sweet and immortal recollections, and yet to turn away from it; but we say "another time," and with this hope we leave Vaucluse behind us.

Perhaps before that other time comes, we may see the lonely tomb

- - - "three leagues from Padua."

At Avignon the name of Petrarch is the common music of the air; every breeze is full of it,—one thinks of nothing else, except perhaps of the Popes, those old men in their mantles who rise up before us like the ghost of Samuel; and yet his love affair is certainly one of the most unnatural on record, though embalmed in such a river of amber, so gracefully and tenderly enshrined, that we forget its absurdity.

The souls of most lovers are like the statue of Memnon, which when the sun shone upon it gave out soft and melodious sounds, but in the darkness of the night uttered only broken or mournful murmurs. But Petrarch dispensed with the

warmth of real sunshine, and sang in the paler glow of his imagination; and in such strains of soft and skyey melancholy, that the soul is won by them, though the inspiring feeling may be often too fanciful for sympathy; for that a passion presumed to be unshared by its object—a passion unsustained by hope, without one intimate link, one recollected avowal, one feeling of full and perfect reciprocity to fasten on, and only fed by unfrequent glimpses of decaying beauty, should have survived the fortieth year of its idol, and that idol a staid matron and the mother, if the common reading be the true one, of eleven children, is a thing almost too incredible to be within reach of fellow feeling.

A beautiful object casually and imperfectly known, may excite a sentiment of admiration, and even for a time of something which a romantic imagination may deem—and perhaps feel, to be passion. But to perpetuate this sentiment during a period of twenty years, the close and endearing ties of tried affection, of proved faith, must knit their strength together, and working into the heart, establish the dominion of habit,—habit grown out of the tenderest sympathies, habit

which once was passion, but which has changed with time into the sweetest of all calm feelings,—entire reliance.

I once read somewhere of a man who fell in love with Clarissa Harlowe, and not only went into mourning for her himself, but put all his establishment into black. But whether the passion (if so it may be called) of Petrarch had its root in the heart or the fancy, whether its object was the wedded Laura de Sade or the maiden Laura de Baux, it has secured to him the immortal laurel; and there he sits enwreathed, a bright star in the poetic firmament, whose mild and constant light will probably outlive the blaze of many a meteor.

After all, I am afraid that the learned canon, if not a mere iris worshipper, was but a leather-mouthed fish, which may be caught (I think old Izaak tells us) with any kind of live fly, and never lets go its hook; and the bright lady a wily angler, who manœuvred her artificial bait with consummate skill, playing off its foil wings gleamingly and drawing on the duped fish, while she herself reposed in the cool sedges, calculating on the length of line which might be safely given to hope without allowing it to knit itself into certainty.

It was coquetry playing with the imagination, not with the heart, for that would have found out the cheat by the quick sensitiveness of instinct.

Francis the First was not a Petrarch in his loves; but at the sight of Laura's tomb,—whom living he would probably have considered as a very insipid woman, he was moved even to verse; witness the *quatrains* still repeated in his name:—

"En petit lieu compris, vous pouvez voir
Ce qui comprend beaucoup de renommée;
Plume, labeur, la langue, et le devoir,
Furent vaincus par l'aimant de l'aimée.

O gentille ame! étant tant estimée
Qui te pourra louer qu'en se taisant;
Car la parole est toujours réprimée,
Quand le sujet surmonte le disant."

CHAPTER XX.

COUNTRY TO AIX—AFFECTIONATÉ PUBLICANS—AIX AS IT SEEMS, AND AS IT WAS—CATHEDRAL—THE TEMPLE AND GATES — ROMAN BATHS — LANGUEDOC — COUNTRY TO MARSEILLES — CORDON SANITAIRE — FIRST BURST OF MARSEILLES—LA VISTA— THE PORT—CLIMATE—EASTERN CHARACTERS AND ANCIENT CUSTOMS—MARSEILLES AND BORDEAUX—THE CATHEDRAL—THE LEGEND.

AVIGNON to Aix,—again grass fields and stubbles, and a greater variety of trees and culture than heretofore; in short, a reprieve,—perhaps only a short one, from the vine and olive. Mulberries still deliciously green, long lines of cypresses planted close, as if to screen out the wind, and houses with some shade about them. Passed the Durance over a wooden bridge, (a marvel they say,) which I expected would have reached to Aix. Did not know that Noves was Noves* until we had left it behind us; so no need of an "O thou!" or a "Pure lady!" Some bright verdure about

* The birth-place of Laura.

Orgon, and good trees now and then. At Pont Royal an *abreuvoir*, agreeably shaded with plane trees; but no positive beauty any where. Have heard Lambese praised, but could not judge of it. Cheerless rain, and a wet fog on the hills,—not a stationary one and palpable, like our great London fogs, of which one may cut off a slice and send it out as a pattern; but a sort of flying mist, that one can look through but yet see nothing. Almonds in great abundance; and often in the little towns a few large trees form a pleasant shade in the rectangle, or triangle, of petty dimensions, which calls itself La Place.

The publicans in Provence have a pretty fatherly or motherly way (as it happens) of recommending their houses to the passing traveller: "Père des Compagnons,"—"Mère des Compagnons," is the tender substitute for "La Croix Rouge," or "Le Cygne Blanc." Sometimes a gay board beckons invitingly—"Au Repos des Enfans;" nor is "L'Auberge Economique," which perhaps seduces the greatest number, forgotten. A stony soil, frequently impoverished by rocks, but cultivated up to its capabilities, and thickly dotted with fruit-trees: cottages small but neat, at least externally,

and smartly roofed with pale tiles. Thickly peopled as we approached Aix, which presents its broad Cour immediately to the eye on entering; but the fine elms which formerly shaded and embellished it, were cut down in the days of July,—some say to prevent their being blown down, time having loosened their roots as if they had been old teeth; others, (drolly enough,) to beautify the town; but most likely, the moment considered, for barricades in case of necessity. I do not know whether or not the necessity arrived, but the elms are gone for ever.

There are some fine ones still in the Place des Prêcheurs; not so fine however (we are told) as the old glorious ones of the Cours, but a blessing in this country of stunted trees and grey foliage. The good old René, whose statue decorates the Cours, could not know his own Aix again were he to come to life in it: it is no longer the city of shows and festivals, of counts and troubadours; the best houses look empty and desolate, and there is a general air of uninhabitation about them. According to our cicerone, the town was ruined by the revolution, and not restored by the restoration; it has broad, well-built, handsome streets,

but no life, no arterial action,—at least in the aristocratical quarter; all the movement is in the markets and shop-streets, where the large black hat of the market-girls makes a pretty effect, and the nunnish hood a very demure one. In country towns the fine quarter is always the dull one; here it is the deserted. Probably in the summer evenings,—the cocks and hens being dislodged from the roof of the family coach,—ancient ladies may dowager it up and down the Corso after the fashion in hot countries; but to-day I have not seen a wheel. Good aristocratical society, an Englishman once resident here told me, laying a great stress on the last word but one,—old provincial noblesse, who never visit Paris or vary their forms of life, but preserve intact the high urbanity, with something of the stateliness of ancient manners.

When Aix was the court of the Counts of Provence, and the nursery of the troubadours; when Alphonso the Second, king of Arragon, held his state there, making verses and singing them—doubtless to the admiration of high ladies and supple minstrels; and Raymond Beranger and the fair Beatrix encouraged and caressed the arts, Aix had its own pedestal, and became it. René, too,

did all he could—though often with better intention than taste, to prolong or rather revive the era of its magnificence. Of modern names which have become European ones it has its list, at the head of which stand those of Mirabeau, Tournefort, Vauvenargues, the Vanloos, (or at least the elder,) and the wise and learned Nicholas Claude Seigneur de Peirese, who should have been first named in point of date, and to whom we owe the introduction of the Angora cat and the oleander: no deduction from his wisdom or his learning either, no more than from the piety of St. Louis for having made us acquainted with the ranunculus.

The cathedral is an ancient building with a handsome porch, curious in its details, but not (I thought) interesting in its general effect. The *office* was performing as we entered, so we sat down outside the choir until the canons had sung out their litanies, which they did droningly, in a half-asleep, humming-top sing-song. But suddenly, a boy with a clear bell-toned voice took up the chaunt and sent it ringing to the roof of the building, where it ended, like a rocket, in an exulting burst. If the boy had not been before my eyes, I should have fancied him hidden in the

dome. When the service was over, we had to run the gauntlet of the regular sights,—first a picture, representing St. Denis carrying his head in his hand; then one in which King René is seen at his devotions, with his mild wife opposite to him,—*presumed* to have been painted by himself; and some faded tapestry that had travelled from our St. Paul's to Aix, our guide said, but knew not when or how.

This same showman,—"captain, or colonel, or knight in arms," but most probably beadle, was magnificently arrayed in scarlet with a silver-hilted sword, which so embarrassed his movements that he was obliged to deposit it in a corner. This eminent personage pointed out to us a rotunda supported by columns of great ascribed antiquity, which forms one of the lateral chapels; it is used as a baptistry, but is called the temple of Diana notwithstanding. His ideas on the subject of 'the great goddess' were rather confused; I fancy he thought her a sort of saint—perhaps a martyr—who had good right to her shrine, and would probably have shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" with all his lungs, if any Demetrius had been there to set him the example. Saw no other.

churches. The fine spire of St. John's, in the pointed or gothic style, was the only thing shown to us as remarkable.

The gates of the cathedral are of walnut wood, beautifully carved, and usually concealed by shutters; but our scarlet man unclosed them with a fracas, itemed at least at forty sous. Saw the baths as we returned—the actual marble baths of the Romans, a pretty woman who showed them to us assured me gravely; and then hurried back to the inn, lest our invalid should think us tardy, but found him surprised at our dispatch.

Aix may be, and they say is, pleasantly surrounded; but here, as elsewhere, the dust puts in its caveat against beauty. Hills towards Marseilles carved into terraces, and industriously cultivated; clumps of wood, and now and then a good Italian bit with rich pines, and mulberries green as emeralds, that preserve at a little distance a very orange-tree air. Houses a dull yellow, not glaring.

We have now passed through a considerable part of Languedoc, and a portion of Provence, and I must say that, as far as we have seen, this minstrel land does not bear out its romantic repu-

tation; and yet it is the very land of the story-teller, as far as sound goes. Here indeed are the vine-covered hills, but then the plant does not hang in festoons, or wreath itself into graceful garlands, as in Italy; it does not beautify every plain-featured spot into the scene of a *fête champêtre*,—it is a mere current bush: the almond too grows wild, and when there is a hedge, usually makes it, unless its place be taken up by the quince, which is as common as the bramble. Olives also abound, but the almond is little better than the hedge willow, the olive (as it is here) hardly so good, and the quince on a level with the crab-apple; the pomegranate indeed is beautiful, but it does not make a leading feature, only a casual embellishment. The Languedoc which we have seen is a rich and highly cultivated country, except where, from the rockiness of the soil, it becomes incapable of benefiting by man's labour; but it is not the Languedoc of Mrs. Radcliffe's beautiful reveries. Long and low ranges of hills intersect it, and sometimes open on wide vales that make us think of our own more lovely ones,—our corn, and cattle, and meadow vales, with the river gliding mildly through the dappled meads, and the handsome

town thereby, whose cathedral spire marks distance by the word of God; but as far as we can judge, there is little picture and less romance. The general character of the scenery is tame,—seldom more than pleasant, often dry and dull; country houses (except perhaps a few in the neighbourhood of the large towns) raw and shadeless, cottages without rural beauty; a general want of forest timber, but very fine platanes occasionally, and sometimes a sprinkling of other trees. Striking towns handsomely embellished,—industrious, populous, and thriving, with spacious houses, beautiful gardens and, no doubt, valuable resources, tread closely upon each other's heels; but the breath of poetry, the colouring of romance, the story of other times—as it especially belongs to this southern land, are rarely felt, or seen, or read, in its present atmosphere or living page.

We have not, it is true, seen the mountainous parts, always the most interesting and characteristic. We know nothing of the wild and (as it is said) beautiful recesses of the Cevennes, nor of many other spots of fair report. Cultivated plains, low hills rocky and scantily wooded; scatterings of olives (none of good growth) and other fruit

trees; narrow streams bordered by rows of poplars, ash, willow, &c., with sometimes a clump branching out more freely, or a single tree of darker foliage, are the general features both of Languedoc and the part of Provence which we have seen. Breaks of the Mediterranean are sometimes caught, as from the Peyrou of Montpellier; and now and then a fine land-stretch as from Béziers, or a valley of sequestered beauty like that of the Pont du Gard; but there is little to realize our fond, early fancies, little on which expectation can repose satisfied: the agricultural labour is industriously performed, the soil usually repaying, but the interest as well as the beauty very much confined to the towns and their surroundings. One charming feature—the luxury of flowers, which in summer enrich the meadows with their soft enamel, is now made over to the hedges; the scythe has mowed down all the bell tribes and star tribes, the velvet pods and honey tubes, that in summer time make a garden of the land, and surprise us northerns by the boldness with which their green-house daintiness exposes itself to the elements. But we are now advancing towards the Provence of the Mediterranean, to which report

ascribes the sky, the vegetation, and the poetic colouring of Italy.

As we move onwards towards Marseilles, (four posts from Aix,) we find ourselves in a narrow valley—all pine woods; then comes a wider one, wooded also, and with sometimes a ruin or a calcined looking town, hanging upon the hills. Beautiful avenues verging off from the road, like Watteau's garden alleys, but seeming to lead to nothing; perhaps in our hasty passing we overlooked the château, which may be very evident notwithstanding, and probably is so; for in France a château rarely runs away from the road, and knows nothing of our contrivances for shutting in and shutting out. Some singular-looking rocks, capriciously indented and very castle-like, break in upon the modest line of the hills; I thought them beautiful, encrusted as they were with innumerable tints that seemed burned into them. After these comes barrenness,—and now the *cordon sanitaire.*

Nothing can be imagined more ridiculous than the judicial inspection to which we were submitted. A gens d'arme opened the door of the carriage, and showed us the necessity of descending; we did so,

and were ushered into a sort of booth, where, being ranged in a row like a family of royal tigers, a polite person, a medical man I suppose, and whom I could not help pitying for the stupid part allotted to him, presented himself and looked intently into our eyes, as if he were examining those of the wonderful child, who had Napoleon marked on one pupil and Emperor on the other. But the scrutiny ended here; there was no question of either pulse or tongue. We would have said something of our not having come from the cholera quarter, but he required no farther testimony; our eyes (two pair of which were certainly rather jaundiced) he civilly considered as a sufficient bill of health, and dismissed us with a bow which might have passed for an apology.

I should think, by the red, green, and yellow houses that flaunt in every vineyard, that Marseilles is not far off, though nothing of it is yet visible. Some soldiers, who have grown loving over their cups, stand by the road-side blubbering and grasping hands,—nothing so mollifying as brandy; at the maudlin point it is all tears and tenderness, full of grief as an elegy, and open-hearted as a cut orange. Out of London and its

environs, I have not seen so much waggon and cart work as on this road: remarked the rapid circulation of merchandise before we arrived at Aix, and the frequency of the small white buildings set out for the accommodation of carters and wayfarers, with tables neatly spread out under a light shed covered with branches of fir, where cool tissane and sliced lemons screen out the less harmless beverages that occupy the back-ground.

As we proceed the houses thicken, and the country to a considerable extent is closely spotted over with buildings; masses of dark pine repose the eye, and a fine stretch of rocks in deep shadow bar the horizon. We had scarcely said "this is fine," when Marseilles and its superb bay opened on us like a vision of Tyre or Epirus. The Mediterranean was in perfect tone—not blue and glittering, but of "a pleasant, sad, sea-water green;" the sun thinly veiled, but sending down a strong, concentrated light on one spot, which shone like an inverted planet on the face of the waters. The islands within the gulph, though not dream-like as the purple Caprea, recall the bay of Naples; while the Château d'If brings back the memory of La Chapelle, Mirabeau, and the lettres-de-cachet

régime. To the left sits Marseilles, which seems continued far into the country by the innumerable *bastides* that dot the vineyards and olive-grounds; to the right is an irregular, projecting land, that gently interrupts the sweep of the bay; and encircling all, a fine rocky amphitheatre stretching its bold arms into the sea, and holding within them a rich variety of objects, which taken together make a splendid picture.

It was really fine; and to see it better, we got out of the carriage at a spot called La Vista, and descended the hill on foot. The entrance of the town—perhaps I should say the suburbs, is not striking. Looked up at a house, and saw "Rue Pavé d'Amour" painted on it in true finger-post letters; expected to have bolted on the orange and myrtle domains of Cupid, but found ourselves in a shabby quarter, full of small shops and humble occupations. But presently better things appeared, and we arrived at the Hôtel Beauveau by an avenue composed of the broad and animated Cours, planted and thronged like the Boulevards of Paris, and La Rue Cannebiere, which terminates in the port, and is probably one of the widest and liveliest streets in Europe.

Stepped at once into handsome apartments looking on the port, which presents a bustling and original scene,—a living Vernet. Ships of all nations, sailors of all countries, quays strewed with bales of cotton, cases of dried fruits, cargoes of oranges,—dates, liqueurs, garlic, pomegranates, grain, wood, and the various produce of Spain, Italy, the Levant, West India islands, &c. If there be a spare bit on the pavement, it is instantly covered with hundreds of small round cheeses, earthenware, and innumerable articles of merchandise: between these more stationary objects a sort of running traffic is carried on,—small stalls, lotteries, ballad-singers, hawkers of poultry, game, cigars; and cheap temptations in the form of pastry, rings, painted pipes, foreign birds, and iced waters, occupy every spot, leaving scarcely room enough for the free circulation of those whom business, curiosity, or idleness may bring amongst them. Does any one want a passage to Liguria, Bastia, Ajaccio? he may take one at this moment under our windows; if for the ports of the Levant or the Baltic, the West Indies or the Americas,—a little lower down, where the large vessels lie, and

I have no doubt that he will immediately find what he seeks for.

Sometimes a Greek passes, or a Turk, or a turbaned woman with the mark of the far-off land upon her, or a bearded Jew or thick-coated Norwegian; but this variety does not exist to the extent that I had expected: I had supposed it a leading feature, but it is only an accessary. I had another supposition; to wit, that old Joseph Vernet's animated and sparkling sea-ports might be overcharged, but he is as true as Hogarth; his race of porters—some laden with bales, others rolling barrels, his smoking Turks and sauntering sailors, are all in full existence; so is his very blue sky, we had it yesterday in perfection. The quays are broad and clean, and at the sunny side all glow and sparkle,—indeed only too hot for out-of-doors enjoyment, while what the poets call the noontide hours last. What a climate! almost enough to warm the dead. It is now past five o'clock, (October 26,) and we sit with our windows open; no fire, a tropical sky, and an air that might nourish the most delicate buds of the east,—quite a fire-fly atmosphere, just such a one as fancy bestows

upon an Indian twilight.* Presently we shall have a bright crescent hanging among the masts, while the fires in the sky are still glowing.

If it were not for the mistral——But as yet we know nothing about it, except from hearsay; when it does come it pierces, but is not injurious (we are told) except in complaints of the lungs. A friend who has passed many winters here assures us, that it seldom prevails for more than ten days during the winter, and even then the sunny side of the street is like a green-house. I do not know whether it may be owing to the old connexion† between Marseilles and the Levant, to its Phocian origin, or to its being the first great city of the Mediterranean that we have come to on our journey, but it seems to me to have an eastern colouring that I have not observed in any other of the southern towns hereabouts, and which greatly becomes its eastern skies.

Old writers have preserved the tradition of some of the singular customs in use in Marseilles in the time of its famous republic. Criminals, condemned to death, were made to drink the juice of hemlock,

* Is there such a thing?

† Now reduced, by various causes, almost to nothing.

which was cultivated for the purpose; and old men who could give good reasons for being tired of life, were allowed to do the same, but in public and, like Socrates, in the midst of their friends. Another custom was kept up amongst the worshippers of Diana, who selected a human victim (slave or criminal) which they fattened, cursed, and turned out into banishment, loaded, like the Hebrew scape-goat, with the sins of the people. But the pleasantest of all was that confiding one of lending money to friends on bonds payable in Elysium; business is now carried on in a more matter-of-fact fashion.

The same legend serves for the origin and progress of nearly all the southern towns, I mean in this direction: Phocian, Roman, or fabulous founders; Roman colonizers; barbaric ravagers; religious massacrers; and finally French rulers. Marseilles, honoured and praised by sages, is a lively handsome town; and though it does not offer the same aspect of magnificence or stationary importance which the first view of Bordeaux presents, is, I think, more animated and characteristic. It is "a city of stirs," the streets alive, the shops showy, the people occupied. I believe we saw Bordeaux

in the wrong moment, for she seemed to sit with her hands before her, while Marseilles has every nerve in action. Most of the streets have *trottoirs*, and there are several squares or *places* planted with trees; but I cannot say that the police enforce the necessity of cleanliness with the attention evidently paid to the same object at Bordeaux. Few catalogue articles here; the Hôtel de Ville is reckoned a fine building, and contains two pictures of the plague which depopulated Marseilles in 1720. Unearthed the cathedral after a long hunt, an uninteresting church in a dirty quarter; it is supposed by some old provincial writers to have been anciently a mosque, from the number of Arabian inscriptions found there. One has been thus translated,—" Dieu est le Seigneur seul permanent. C'est ici la sépulture de son serviteur et martyr, qui s'étant confié en la miséricorde de Dieu très haut, il la lui a accordée en pardonnant ses fautes. Joseph fils d'Abdallah, de la ville de Metelen, décédé dans la lune Zilhugé."

At present, the chief glory of the cathedral is the tomb of St. Lazarus, with the real head therein,—as our very fat conductress informed us. To this tomb belongs a pillar elaborately carved, some

ornamental riches, and a legend with which our cicerone was altogether unacquainted.

Three years after the crucifixion of our Saviour, (according to the chronicle,) an open boat was stranded on the coast of Marseilles. In that boat were many of the disciples of Jesus, and with them Mary Magdalen, her sister Martha, and Lazarus their brother; who having been set adrift by the Jews and cast upon a foreign shore, dispersed themselves over the country of Provence, taught Christianity in pagan temples, and scooping hermitages in the rocks, converted the heathen by the influence of their holy example. Here Lazarus the beloved of Christ died a second time, and was buried—as the belief is, in the tomb that goes by his name. To this brief legend, the chronicler adds, that Mary Magdalen had concealed within her bosom a vial, containing the tear which our Saviour shed at the grave of her brother Lazarus in Bethany, and which, after many chances and changes, found a splendid shrine in the abbey of the Trinity at Vendôme, and also a merciful purpose: for the vial being carried yearly in procession on Good Friday, a prisoner expressly chosen as one whose case was "piteux et rémissible," was

appointed to follow it, bearing in his hand a lighted torch; which prisoner received free grace after the ceremonial, in commemoration of the deliverance of Louis de Bourbon, Comte de Vendôme, who being captured at the battle of Agincourt and incarcerated in the tower of London, escaped through his faith in the holy tear.

There is something so beautiful in this human tear, so full of hope to the weak and trembling, so consoling as a symbol of the link—even of affection, which may unite a divine nature to an earthly and erring one, that I have never read those two words, "Jesus wept," without a swell of the heart.

CHAPTER XXI.

MARSEILLES, CONTINUED—NOTRE DAME DE LA GARDE—THE LAZARETTO—MARCHE AUX FLEURS—THE PEOPLE—MARIE DE MEDICIS—THE TIDELESS SEA—BASTIDES—STAGNANT WATER AND ITS ADVANTAGES—AUBAGNE—CUGNES—LE MONASTERE MANQUE — PASS OF OLLICOULES—TOULON.

LIKE Touchstone, "I care not for my spirits, if my legs were not weary;" but to-day they failed me before I had arrived at Nôtre Dame de la Garde, so I lost the celebrated view. A pleasant terrace winds round the hill that leads to it, and commands one of less extent, but still of considerable scope. The sea, the islands, the sweep of scorched hills, and the city with its six thousand bastides, lay before us: it is a view that requires the softening aid of shadows, and we saw it under a vertical sun; the general tone was ashy, it looked like a city built of cinders, and the parched vision turned mechanically to the sea, to repose upon its freshness. This point has not the power or beauty of

La Vista, but commands a closer and fuller view of the town.

No lazaretto accessible,—I mean to curiosity; to get in you must have a plague passport, or your vessel the mark of a pestilent land on her stern. Report calls it the gem of lazarettos, a haven of indolence after the horrors of a sea-voyage; where, if you can forget the friends you are dying to embrace, the business which imperiously demands your presence, the time lost, the plans frustrated by delay, you may be very comfortable. I never was but once in a lazaretto, it was at Leghorn; one solitary man was there performing quarantine, we saw him through a lattice, striding up and down a covered gallery with the chafed air of a wild beast in his den; his dress, which had something eastern in it, was not unfit for sculpture, and if an artist could have seized the quick and perturbed expression of limb and feature, and transferred it to marble, he would have found a fine personification of impatience.

Scarcely any traces of antiquity here, and few modern buildings of any note. Puget did not embellish his native town as Palladio did Vicenza, or San Michele Verona. I did not see the Musée,

so can say nothing of it; it was closed when we went there—I forget why. The liveliest out-of-doors thing here is the Cours, which, though greatly inferior to the Paris Boulevards in breadth, extent, and splendour, recalls them incessantly. Contrary to the arrangement of the latter, the carriages drive at each side and the promenade is in the centre; in the centre, too, is held the flower and fruit-market, and the look through the branches of the trees from the top of the avenue is full of life and character. The spread of huge umbrellas, all white and stationary, that roof the gay stalls, with the continual passing of bustling crowds, become the glittering sky, to-day without a streak in it; and though the details may belong a little to rag-fair, yet the general view is bright and amusing.

No display of flowers, at least to-day; the money of Paris seems to beat the sun of the south all hollow. What beautiful families of plants—pied, streaked, and dappled, are clustered together in the narrow alleys of the Marché aux Fleurs, unfolding their velvet leaves and diffusing their amalgamated perfumes. From the homely, though fragrant wall-flower, early polyanthus, and small

painted pot of dwarf tulips, to the camelia japonica, azalia indica, or glowing cactus, every thing is to be had. The active porter loads his basket or his barrow with the most delicate and precious plants, and receiving his directions from the plumed chasseur or important footman, trots off with his load; while the modest sempstress passes with her small purchase of hearts-ease peeping through the sheet of clean paper, carefully folded round it; and the higgling portress, after having counted the buds of a dozen Bengal rose-trees, decides for a handsome wear-and-tear pot of scarlet geranium, which seems better furnished than its neighbours.

The ancient ladies who presided as Floras in the market to-day, were mounted up on high chairs elevated above their tubs of immortelles, which were, probably owing to the lateness of the hour, their only article of merchandise. For this enduring flower there is always a sure sale—crucifixes, altars, saints, the busts of great men, and of handsome actresses, have all their chaplets of immortelles: it is flung upon the stage; it is suspended over the tombstone; Napoleon, Louis, Charles, have had

theirs; Louis Philippe has his, and Henri Cinq would, like his predecessors, exhaust the stalls, if opportunity offered. In all this scene-shifting nothing seems permanent but the least permanent of nature's gifts—a flower!

This is a lively happy-looking population, seeming as if it had no harm in it; no *Septembrizing* visages, that we have seen, nothing that recalls the horrible re-action of 1815; but, on the contrary, honest, good-humoured ones, and a general tone of quiet civility in the particular class of persons with whom strangers have most to do: even on the quays there is no noise but that caused by the inevitable bustle of business, and no apparent disposition to quarrelling or violence. Women fairer of complexion than in many towns less to the south, but not remarkable for beauty,—at least those whom we have seen. Good heads, and sometimes fine ones, amongst the downright peasants, men and women; but nothing of the actual city growth, like the houris of Bordeaux—or their madrasses. Petticoats extravagantly short, stockings of a brownish orange-colour uncomfortably flesh-like, and the general air (I speak only of the *femmes du*

peuple) free rather than coquettish. Marseilles, like all the towns of note in this part of France, has its public library, musée, academy, &c., but no great enthusiasm, it is said, for the sciences or arts. Amongst its cited reputations, Petronius in ancient times, and Puget in modern ones, have the most diffused celebrity; Honoré d'Urfé* being now, as well as his *Astré*, nearly forgotten.

The young men here, professional and otherwise, of the middle ranks, are said to be republicans, the working classes Carlists, and the large remainder lovers of peace. Such, at least, is the schedule of political opinions given to us by those whom experience has rendered competent to judge of such matters: for ourselves, passing strangers as we are, we can know nothing, but we are told that the newspaper *émeutes*, which alarm us at Paris, are mere stage thunder, very fierce and rumbling at a distance, but mere pebbles in a tin canister when examined. Commerce flourishes, and the people—the real *operatives* on such occasions, being fully employed, have no disposition to trouble calm waters.

* Also a native of Marseilles.

It might have been on such a day as this that Mary de Medicis landed at Marseilles. Her galley emulated that of the Egyptian queen; cloth of gold, fringe of gold, ebony, ivory, and pearls, were every where; rubies, emeralds, and diamonds scattered full-handed; the poop was studded with gems, and a train of Florentine galleys followed the track of its stern. The "serpent of Old Nile" lay, Venus-like, beneath her Tyrian canopy; the serpent of fair Tuscany being, if Peter Paul used true colours, a portly personage, had probably a chair of state: neither saw the asp or the exile in the distance.

Out early. Stopped near to a fountain in a distant street, to inquire about something; two women were there washing clothes and gossiping. One said to the other, "Vous vous tourmentez toujours, n'importe de quoi." The other shook her head and sighed: it was a speechless contradiction, but a decided one. It is true, that with some dispositions "au défaut de causes, tout deviendra occasion," but still every man best knows the plague of his own heart; yet I have often remarked that there are certain persons who have the mania of not

allowing others to be unhappy in any way, but that which they themselves conceive to be a legitimate one.

Drove along the shore in the sunbeams, basking in their gentle warmth and enjoying what I dearly love,—the fine aspect and fresh air of the sea. If we could silence fancy, we might well believe this sea the ocean; but we imagine that we ought to miss the tides, and get tired of always seeing the same water-mark. It may be wild and billowy or calm and glassy, dark as a beryl or blue as the bluest sapphire; but it neither comes or goes, and so we begin to fancy that its stationary beauty must have dulness in it, and to recollect that beyond it is another sea, an ocean one, upon whose sands gay elves

> - - - "with printless feet
> Do chase the ebbing Neptune."

This is human nature, the infant's and the man's; the cake is a good cake, rich and sugared, but if our allotted slice has not a large piece of citron in it, we refuse it poutingly. "All this availeth nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

As we returned, the yellow rays of a descending sun fell on the solitary light-house, that rises alone on its rock in the midst of the waves. Several small barks and light feluccas were standing into shore: two larger vessels were stretching out from it, but making little weigh, for there was not a breath stirring. At the foot of a range of barren but finely-curved rocks, reposed a gathering of bastides of the humbler kind, with pine trees about them that effaced, by their bright deep green, all that remained of summer verdure. These rich tints reconcile us once more to evergreens, for which the small round-about olives, with whose ugliness we have been so long familiar, had almost spoiled our taste,—a great pity, for as we are often thrown upon them for all that the eye can take in of freshness, it would be well if we could preserve intact the grateful affection which we naturally feel for those remnants of the feast that remain after its abundance is over, as if to preserve us from the horrors of inanition.

These bastides are naked contrivances, generally enclosed between stone walls, whose hard lines fret the eye: many of them are made sentry-boxes, "not large enough to live in, nor small enough to

hang to one's watch." Those which we saw had neither shade nor depth enough for coolness; under a strong sun they must blaze like the copper castle in the story, I think, of one of the Calendars. A preferable thing in summer would be a dark dwelling in a narrow street, for there the opposite houses would make shade,—an essential to comfort in a hot climate, which seems altogether overlooked in the construction of a bastide. There are no cool porches, no dark arcades; even the pine-tree is often so disposed, that the interior of the house can receive no advantage from its shade; but probably both windows and blinds are, according to the fashion of the south, closed till the fall of evening, which is, I believe, the true way to keep a house cool, though it is not the pleasantest; for in excluding air and light, we must also exclude the loveliness of earth and the spendour of heaven.

Perceived to-day an unpleasant odour from the water in the port; it is sometimes complained of here, but is said not to be injurious to health; perhaps, like the exhalations from the canals of Amsterdam, it may do good. I once met with a lady, who told me that both herself and her brother had been cured of chest complaints of the

most alarming nature, by inhaling the putrescent vapour exuded from the canals of that city at the fall of evening, after an intensely hot day. Tried to get a box at the theatre, but were too late. Some one told us that it is badly attended, and abused the actors. No play on Saturday evenings, so we had no opportunity of judging.

A certain kind of cane is common here, (and may be in many other places, though I have not remarked it,) which does not add, at least in its present state, either to the warmth or beauty of the landscape. It is a coarse flag-like plant, with a raw jungle look; but I suppose has its uses. Olives and mulberries prevail as usual; and the course of the river may be traced by the trees which fringe its banks, but are only visible as far as the influence of its moisture reaches. The strong masses of pine, of which I have already spoken, and whose live verdure is often suddenly darkened by a group of pyramidal cypress, or a clump of broad black firs, alone prevent the immediate country from looking nearly as arid as the rocks that surround it.

Stone walls for a considerable way out of Marseilles (Toulon road) intercepting all farther view,

when we at last got beyond them, we found the country beautiful. A charming surface gracefully diversified, the river line—always under the eye, marked by a considerable variety and fulness of foliage, other trees enriching the vineyards and breaking in upon the sameness of the olive, and the finely denticulated wall of rock frequently covered with broad masses of pine.

I was much and unexpectedly pleased; for though rather taken with Marseilles, I had not imagined that its neighbourhood had so much charm about it. Women at Aubagne looking pretty in hats of black beaver, coquettishly put on over large caps. Heard of a valley not far off, and very beautiful, with the ruins of a Cistertian convent making its vignette, but did not see it. The country, as we looked down upon it, seemed paved with vines; found Cujes in the midst of them,—a small town famous for capers, and infamous for bold beggars, who laughed at and scolded us while they asked alms. Mounted up again into a country of rocks and pines; the soft green tops of the young trees mock at winter: from the summit is a wild view, with a pleasant kind of loneliness about it,—something more than grave,

and less than savage,—just fit for the site of a monastery.

I was thinking so, when a young priest popped his head over a bush; had it been a lank monastic face, or a thoughtful one, with an Abelard eye or a touch of St. Augustin in it, it might have been manageable; but what could be done with a downy cheek, crisped hair, and fat eyelid,—an organ-loft cherubim? Nothing! so I threw up my monastery.

The descent is good, hanging over a valley of pines, with a fine forest sweep to the left, and a break down in the opposite hills that lets in the sea (or rather a streak of it) with an island exactly in the openin g. The valley below may be called the golden vale; pines excepted, it is a sheet of vines all in the yellow leaf,—not a tint of green; at length, after running through another town and some unfeatured country, we approach the celebrated pass of Olioules.

Perhaps too celebrated, and yet it is no every-day horror, no common-place desolation. How wild and fearful is the bleached aspect of those amazing rocks that shoot upwards in their melancholy nakedness; and how awfully spectral that

ruined fortress that stands at the mouth of the pass, and rakes it from head to foot: the air has witchcraft in it, and the scene a strange and supernatural potency that made me glad to feel myself in the common world again. Excellent ground for Glamis and his weird women, for the wild "all hail!" and the second, and the third, announcing in the hollow voice of unearthly augury the three steps to power and—perdition!

I hardly know why I said—"perhaps too celebrated," for few realities can surpass this in poetic dreariness; it was probably the new road, that does not answer to the call of the imagination or answers jarringly, that made me splenetic. It is an excellent post road, and winds round the base of the rocks most conveniently; but does not suit the character of the scene quite so well as a worse one, that formerly clambered up their sides.

But it is still wild enough for the most distorted fancy, and it was rather a relief to find oneself amidst the agreeable garden features that surround the village of Olioules. Looked back at the ghastly rocks and the eyeless fortress, which seemed to be coming after us; its walls are blank

and windowless, but it seems to see out of its skull like the awful statue of that Medicis,* whose mysterious aspect gives such an appalling expression of life to the stillness of marble. One impression is left on the mind by the view of this gorge,—that of having seen something which, though far from Greece and uncanonized by the memory of glorious deeds, cannot be traversed without a feeling that leads one back in thought to the sacred pass of Thermopylæ.

Toulon is pleasantly approached, but it does not spread out its peacock's tail like Marseilles; it seems a place of considerable movement and noisy as a rookery. The first impression which we received of its popular amusements, was in the shape of a *charivari:* for a moment we feared that it had been provoked by E——'s green bonnet,† but found that it was intended for a widow in the neighbourhood, who had married her cook. What a din! all the rabble in uproar: one might believe it a Saturnalia of galley-slaves just broken loose; bells, horns, rattles, trumpets, drums, cries, shouts,

* Michael Angelo's wonderful work, in the new sacristy (or Capella de' Principi) of the church of San Lorenzo at Florence.

† The rallying colour of the old dynasty.

groans, confounded together in a general roar, wide-mouthed and loud as thunder; then a long, deep, portentous hiss like the awakening of a nest of serpents, swelling again into a repetition of the roar, and then breaking up with a clamour of fierce and desperate discords, that seemed to have neither sound of human voice or instrument of man's invention in it.

At length "the hurly burly's done," the performers being, I suppose, exhausted, and we are permitted to sleep—if we can. This mode of expressing popular indignation towards an individual has something exceedingly fearful and savage in it: I should dread a charivari in the turbulent south, as I should the sound of a war-whoop in an American solitude.

A tempting show of fruit in the streets,—Pomona queens it beneficently in her kingdom of Provence; figs, grapes, almonds, oranges, bergamots, lemons, plums, citrons, olives, the healing jujube, and the pistachio of Aleppo,—with a hundred other of her foremost luxuries, are abundant. The pomegranate in its dark leaf and bright scarlet blossom is beautiful; but its produce may be ranked with Aladdin's vegetable jewellery: down-

right rubies to the eye, but to the taste, the most insipid of fruits, unless it be a medlar. Myrtles, oleanders, and other beautiful things, grow (we are told) wild on the sea-shore, but the climate is said to differ so in different parts, that fruits are gathered in one place while buds are knitting in another; and seed-time and harvest, instead of dividing the seasons into fixed periods, make a perpetual cycle.

CHAPTER XXII.

TOULON—THE DOCK-YARD—THE BAGNES—THEIR MORAL TENDENCY—TREATMENT—THE OUTCAST—POOR LIVING AND LYING—A DEARTH—VICIOUS CHILDREN—WOODEN FIGURES—GRIEF AND SHAME—WOMAN'S LOVE—A SUPERFLUOUS CEREMONY.

To-day we have seen the new port, the docks, the arsenal, and all that therein is: for this, it is necessary to have a permission, which is obtained immediately by applying to the British consul.

A more lively picture of ingenuity, skill, and manual labour, combining to produce the implements of power and the means of conquest, than the port exhibits even in this time of peace, cannot well be imagined. Several ships are on the stocks, and others, which have fought the fight and whose names are already historical, are laid up or going through repairs; while some, whose prows were hung with wreaths of victory, are, like the name in whose high fellowship those wreaths were gained, thrown by, cashiered,—forgotten!

One of our party, who had never seen any thing larger than a steam-packet, was delighted at the opportunity of mounting up into an eighty-gun ship, and examining all its details from stem to stern; wondering, questioning, and moralizing,—as all are disposed to do, even the most thoughtless, when the mighty machine, whose solitary path in the great waters had often been traced by the fancy, is for the first time brought substantially before them. The mind goes along with its destiny, its certain perils, its possible fate; and acknowledges, in the strong hand of Providence, the power which steers it through the horrors of the tempest, and suspends it in safety over the boiling and bottomless deep.

As we walked along, we passed several bands of galley-slaves employed at their daily tasks. Some, whose time of confinement was nearly expired, or whose conduct had been such as to merit indulgence, were suffered to go more at large than their deeper-dyed companions; and several came up to us offering straw boxes, toys of carved wood, and other trifles of their own workmanship for sale, with the most beseeching words and gesture. Their general dress consists of a loose scarlet

jacket, coarse trowsers, and a red cap; but there are a few who wear green ones with metal plates in them. These (our cicerone says) are the worst among the bad, and are thus marked as a punishment for some especial atrociousness. We observed that they were employed within the Bagne, and had the heaviest tasks assigned them, but none seemed over laboured; many stood about in groupes gossiping idly, others reposed in the shade, playing cards—the pack a mutilated one, with which a link-boy would scarcely have contaminated his finger and thumb. Famous Caravaggios: nothing wanting but the pale lamp and sullen back-ground.

Generally speaking, I never saw a more impenitent-looking crew. The fine blue sky, the flooding sunshine and bright waters, the sound of rapid oars, of thoughtless or of busy voices, the blowing air, and unimprisoned view, gave a character of gaiety, of almost freedom to the scene, very little in unison with our ideas of a place of punishment: and though a crowd of chained and branded wretches, cast out from the pale of society with the indelible mark upon them, presents a melancholy spectacle of human degradation, and fills

the mind with painful images of perversity and crime; yet to a person of that class of life, where the passions are usually uncontrouled by education, and the mind exposed to the dangers of evil contact, I should not think a view of the Bagne likely to be productive of much benefit as a moral lesson. Its horrors have been humanely mitigated, and there remains little to terrify a man of a coarse and hardened nature, feebly, if at all, liable to be shocked by an inflicted fellowship with vice, and who has not yet experienced the lowering effect of long years of imprisonment,—indeed who disbelieves in it. For few who have been sent to expiate crime by a life's bondage, imagine that the judgment will be fulfilled to the letter: a hardy rogue feels that hope is stronger than the sentence of the law, and counts on the resources of time, and the activity of chances. The vicious companionship of the Bagne perpetuates his love of vice, cheers him in his path of iniquity, and checks the tendency (should any exist) to reformation. He regrets his orgies, his *potage gras*, and the opportunities of wickedness for which he chiefly values freedom; but in the mean time he reflects that they wait for him, and that by and by he shall be

reinstated in all the advantages (suspended only for a time) which belong to his profession. In a Bagne " there are few tears, there are no blushes."

But for a being in whose mind, though partially corrupted, some sense of shame, perhaps some spark of virtue, may yet linger, this chaining two by two, this hideous companionship, is the real punishment: all the rest is nothing in comparison. What torture to be linked with one in whom vice has become habitual, and decent feeling extinct! It is like the misery which nature inflicts on those wretches, whom she sometimes (as if in cruel caprice) joins together. If one dies, the other is condemned to drag about the infected carcass until the principle of life is contaminated, and at length extinguished.

If a *forçat* has conducted himself from the period of his detention with unvarying propriety, he is allowed, as its termination approaches, a certain degree of freedom, released—at least by day, from his companion, and permitted to go about singly, and to employ a considerable part of his time for his own benefit. Some of the privileged have a very decent appearance, and though the chain be always round the leg, contrive to draw the trowser

over it, so as to conceal it entirely. A young man stood at the foot of the prison stairs with a table before him, full of small articles prettily carved in wood; something respectable in his manners and appearance interested us, and we inquired his story. It was a common one; he had been seduced into evil company, found guilty of having forged a signature, and condemned to the galleys for five years: the time was nearly expired, and in consequence of his uniformly good conduct, more than the common facilities were afforded to his industry, that he might be enabled to accumulate a small sum, and recommence life virtuously.

"But he can never return to his family or native place again," said our informer; "a known galley-slave can never hope to mix with other men as their equal."

And in these few words are contained the lasting sting, the enduring terror of the punishment, its power as a means of prevention, and perhaps the cause of its inefficiency as an instrument of reformation. The chain is broken, and the hold of the companion loosed; but the brand remains, and he who bears it about him finds the avenues to virtuous society closed against him, and his earnest

desire to become a member of the proud family of honourable men repulsed at every point. Even should the hand of individual philanthropy be held out to him; or should two or three, remembering the merciful precepts of the gospel and feeling that it is not because a man has sinned, that sin should necessarily be incarnate in his nature, make an entrance for him, the benefit, however consoling as a mark of that sympathy which the renewed heart seeks longingly, would still be too partial to be effective.

The true object of punishment should be reform. Justice, and the safety of the virtuous and peaceable portion of society, require its judicious infliction; but a punishment protracted to the end of life, continued in the midst of repentance, in the possession of liberty, impeding the one, blighting the other; the punishment, in short, of the brand, defeats the great moral end. A criminal restored to society, having within him the seeds,—perhaps the earnest desire of reformation, cannot efface it: in vain he changes his country and his name, in vain do time, and years, and casualties do their unfailing work; still the mark is there, burnt into the flesh, and he feels

that at any moment an accident may bring it to light. He knows himself an outcast, even should he not be taught that he is one by others; his life is a tissue of deceit and dread: fearing to risk society and unfit for solitude, the chances are that in despair he takes again to the early habits of vicious companionship, and grows a hater of the virtue which refuses to accept his atonement.

It is to the credit of the reigning authorities, as well as to the interior police of the Bagnes, that the horrible nuisances formerly complained of exist no longer; the passages are now clean and airy, and that part of the interior which strangers are permitted to visit, perfectly neat and well ventilated. I supposed at first that the dormitory, through which we were led, was a sort of show thing, like the display ward usually kept spruce for the inspection of strangers in a fashionably patronised hospital; but our guide, who seemed to have no interest in the matter, assured us that the whole prison was equally clean, which we were inclined to believe from the absence of all close and unhealthy odours, and the generally robust appearance of the prisoners, which, their thin diet considered, is really remarkable.

No meat is allowed, unless procured by what the men can gain in those few spare moments when they are permitted to work for themselves, or supplied by the kindness of friends whose attachment has outlived the disgrace of its object. The prison allowance for each man is thirty ounces of bread a-day, a scanty portion of vegetable soup made without meat, and of vegetables *qui ont battu la mer*, to use the cicerone's phrase, which means, I suppose, old pease and beans, and other stale sea-stores, and half a bottle of weak wine,—poor diet certainly for men who are at hard labour from half-past six in the morning till four in the afternoon, when they are driven in, take their slight dinner, and remain shut up till the next day. The task hours vary according to the season of the year. Before the prisoners are let out in the morning, they receive their portion of bread, which they may eat or reserve as they please: this is all they are allowed till the lean dinner comes, which closes the repasts for the day; their bed is an inclined plane, on which they lie jammed side by side, each on a thin strip of something called a mattress, but which appeared, as it lay rolled up on the top of the bench, not thicker than pasteboard. Each

man is allowed a rug with which to cover himself, but remains chained by night as by day.

There are at present in the Bagnes four thousand *forçats;* and five thousand workmen of the town and neighbourhood are daily employed in the port. We are told, that in the time of Napoleon the number of the former had amounted to nine, and the latter to nearly ten thousand persons; a proportion which, as far as it respects the galériens, is altogether at variance with the generally received and reasonable idea, that the crimes of the poor are often generated by the want of occupapation. A diminution of one half of the number employed is the natural consequence of the long continuance of peace; but what have become of the idle hands? One turns round to look for them in the prison, and learns with surprise that the number of criminals has diminished in even a still greater proportion than that of labourers or mechanics.

We asked if there were any prisoners of note here, and were shown the man who had stolen the diamonds of Mademoiselle Mars, and who I suppose has acquired some sort of prison celebrity by the extent of the robbery. But our guide seemed

rather ashamed of bringing forward so ordinary a malefactor as a prominent feature, and appeared to regret that the more atrocious villains, who for the boldness and blackness of their crimes had been condemned for life, were no longer producible, having been recently, I think he said, transferred to Brest.

"Formerly (he added) we have had priests and notaries, and remarkable people in their way, such as the famous Count de Ste. Helene, and others, but now they send us nothing but common thieves, —no one in for more than twenty years;" and he looked complainingly, like one ill used and deprived of his just rights by an iniquitous stretch of authority.

Dangerous and desperate characters, or those who are suspected of meditating mutiny or evasion, are confined to the hulks; we did not go into them, but they were represented to us as much less clean than the prisons on shore, and fearfully hot in summer. Many of the criminals, or as they are called here, the condemned, (les condamnés,) are young boys,—two or three were indeed mere children in appearance. What a melancholy childhood! Nothing so revolting as a vicious child,—nothing so

pitiable, so to be pitied. The holy bloom of innocence (for is it not holy in its purity?) mildewed by the foul contagion, and no passion to goad, to uproot, to whirl every thing before it, no apology in crime for crime,—admitting that such attempt at palliation as the passions offer might go for something; but the mere gangrene of depravity, inoculated into the young life-blood by vile precept, or still more vile example.

Generally speaking, these culprits would puzzle Lavater, being a particularly harmless looking crew. A few had the close-knit brow of care, rather than of guilt, but I did not remark one positively nefarious visage; though of course there must be many among them inured to crime, and hardened in its exercise.

Last year a prisoner murdered his companion of the chain, and was guillotined within the Bagne a few hours after the deed was committed. Justice is administered by the commandant, or whatever else the title of the first in office may be, without reference to a higher power. Mutiny, and other offences involving imminent results, are punishable by death. If a forçat escapes, an instant pursuit commences; if taken within the

port, the reward is 25 francs; if in the town 50; if in the country 100: he is then double-ironed, imprisoned in a dungeon for a certain length of time, or the term for which he has been condemned extended to a longer period. Such at least is the statement of our conductor, to whom we are indebted for whatever information we have been able to obtain about the Bagnes.

Some figures in painted wood, clad in old armour like our grim warriors in the tower, decorate the arsenal. There is always, to me, something shocking in these painted effigies,—they seem so veritably, yet so unnaturally alive. A picture represents life, as a fine actor does the character which he adopts: we give ourselves up to the charm of the illusion, without forgetting that it is one: but in these images of man the look of life is so fearfully strong yet so unreal, that we fly from the horror that creeps over us, as we should from the approach of a spectre. I can imagine the passion of fear brought out, (as Miss Baillie has so finely done it by other means,)* increased, wrought up into almost frenzy, by the aspect of one of those figures in a lone gallery at twilight. The fixed

* In her powerful drama on the passion of Fear.

yet pursuing gaze, the suspended action, seeming every moment on the point of renewing itself, the imagined movement gaining on the rivetted gazer until he doubts whether it does not advance towards him, (a common illusion, to which we are often subject when the influence of fear is out of the question,)—all gaining upon the mind with the striding rapidity of terror, and reducing it to that state of weakness, when shadows are believed in and attested to as the deadly population of the grave.

I have said, that in a Bagne there are few tears —no blushes; but said it hastily, for I have seen both. As we were quitting the docks, an unfortunate man sat on a beam at the end of the Corderie, with a decent looking female beside him; both were sobbing bitterly: condemned for a first offence and only recently arrived, he had not yet been hardened into shamelessness. The boy to whom he was ironed had, perhaps from some natural feeling of pity or of delicacy, withdrawn himself as far from the wretched pair as the length of the chain would permit, leaving them to their sad communications,—and sad indeed they seemed. Shame is the homage which vice in its beginning

pays to virtue; and the proof that the principle of good is not yet extinct, though guilt wrestles with it and keeps it down. The prisoner covered his face with his hands as we passed, while the poor woman was too much absorbed in grief to be sensible of our approach. It was his sister, (our conductor said,) who had obtained permission to visit him for a few moments, adding, "It is the first time she has seen him in his prison-dress." Poor creatures! what a meeting of sorrow and of shame!—of shame even for the innocent. We gave the man a trifle, and when he would have thanked us, both burst into tears, and we could hear their sobs as we quitted the building.

Beautiful stories are told here of woman's love; of the fond hearts that come with their grief and their devotedness, watching and working for their guilty husbands, fathers, or sons; and waiting patiently till the day of freedom arrives, that it may not be also a day of loneliness for the freed, but that the voice of affection may help him to welcome it. How lovely is the image of virtue, purifying by its presence the abode of vice! How the soul reposes on its steady, unfearing, straight-

forward aspect, growing young again in such noble companionship!

When we returned to our inn, I asked a question of the waiter, which I had forgotten at the Bagne,—that was, whether the forçats who died there were interred within the precincts of the prison, or had a burying-ground allotted to them elsewhere? He replied gravely, that he had never heard of their being buried any where, and seemed to think it an unnecessary form. He knew that they had a chapel and a priest, a guillotine and an executioner; but as to their being buried, he had never heard of such a thing.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TOULON, CONTINUED—GREEKS—HEBREWS—MIXED RACE—NOVEMBER—HYERES—POSITION AND VIEW—PALMS—VILLA STULTZ—ORANGE GARDENS—MASSILLION—CLIMATE—FRUIT, FLOWERS, AND PRETTY WOMEN—COUNTRY TO CUERS—THE DEAR OLD YEARS—FREJUS—A LEGEND—THE PASS OF LESTRELLES—APPROACH TO CANNES—THE DRYAD'S TOMB—ORIENTAL CHARACTER OF THE SCENERY—CANNES.

Toulon is but a poor town, with narrow streets furnished with causeways, where the tradespeople sit and work, arrange their goods, or occupy themselves in any way they please; for I observe that the pedestrians prefer the middle of the street, and interfere but little with them. It has one handsome square, and several *places*, with trees and fountains, which in summer time must be invaluable: streets full of life, and an animated population, who buy, sell, wash, work, gossip, and seem, in short, to live out of doors. Every fountain, every thread of water that trickles through the streets, has its

group of washerwomen down upon their knees on the pavement; and the maritime and commercial movement which the port, dock-yards, arsenal, &c. gives to the various trades and occupations dependent on them, greatly vivifies the general picture.

Fine quays, broad and airy; but no stir, except among a cluster of Jews canvassing rags, or speculating on ingots, - it might have been either; some were squalid and degraded-looking, the glory of Israel "shone no more at all in them;" but two, who overtopped the rest, had the fine melancholy cast of head which, outliving ages of bondage, is still sometimes found amongst the remnant of this antique people. Some lazy Greeks drawled slowly in and out of their bark, with an air of solemnity which one could have wished, for the sake of this bright name, had had less of stupidity in it. A boy with a straight nose, making one line with his forehead, and underground eyes that looked as if the shading round them made part of themselves, had something delicate and ideal about him: the rest seemed dull and dogged.

Women here remarkably pale, but often pretty, with fine eyes,—the common beauty of the south. The mixed race more in evidence than even at Mar-

seilles; Spanish, Italian, and even Indian and Egyptian physiognomies mixing with, and sometimes almost effacing the French character,—so at least it seemed to us. I speak always of the working class, the only one which presents itself prominently to the rapid glance of a passing stranger.

To-day we enter what in England is called the gloomy month of November, but it comes like Guido's Aurora. The plane trees opposite to our windows are as full and verdant as they could have been in the month of June, and though it is not yet seven o'clock, the washer-women are already hard at work at the neighbouring fountain,—a ball-supper fountain fringed with aquatic plants, through which the water is gently filtered, every leaf serving as a tube from whose point a clear drop falls incessantly. Perfumed water, gold fish, and reduced dimensions, and a prettier *trionfo* for the court supper-table of old Carlton-house, could not be well imagined.

Would go to Hyères, which was somehow or other confounded in my fancy with paradise, and so lost my illusions. H—— imagined it another Terracina, with the lonely strand and something like the old Volscian town above it, standing out

amidst palm trees; and I had placed it on a pebbly shore, set round a sparkling bay, and swelling upwards into an amphitheatre hung with rich and bloomy gardens. But it is a league from the sea, and the intervening plains round which itself and its hills make a sweep, look (though perhaps they may not actually be so) as flat as a billiard-table.

The upper, or old town, is steep and dirty; we mounted up to the church, and from thence looked down upon the modern Hyères, the harbour, the encircling hills, and the opposite islands. The view merited a better light than that in which we saw it; but I thought the town itself, and the garden-houses, which are profusely scattered about, had a melancholy character, not altogether owing to the absence of sunshine. The sea is too much blocked out by the islands to preserve much either of expanse or dignity: the gardens are walled in, and crowded with orange trees: we looked about for the palms which travellers have seen covering the plains, but could not find them; but afterwards discovered four or five in a garden in the town, and recollected that we had remarked about as many more in another as we entered it. There are, as

usual, vines and mulberries, and pomegranates straggling in the hedges; but the palms, from our point of view at least, "have this extent—no more."

The upper, or old town of Hyères, is left to the people; but the houses in the lower, with their garden supplements, are chiefly let out in lodgings, or singly to strangers who are sent here for the benefit of a divine climate, that knows nothing about the fatal mistral, which neutralizes the effect of nature's bounty, as far as relates to its influence on an impaired constitution, in almost every part of the sea-coast country of Provence. Montpellier, Marseilles, Toulon and all the intermediate towns, are more or less subject to its power; but Hyères has found out a sunny haven sheltered from the *bise* of the north-west, and open to every soft and southern influence. It is now supposed to be one of the most successful climates in consumptive cases; less variable than Nice, and almost as serenely beautiful as Barcelona. A new name on the healing list, but placed by many eminent opinions in the same rank with that of the island of Madeira.

Nature apart, the most picturesque thing at Hyères is the girdle of ruined towers running

round the green hill that rises up behind the town with an air of ineffectual protection. But the finest is the villa of Mr. Stultz, Baron of something—I have forgotten what, (but *dearer* to English ears under the old familiar appellation,) who resides here, and passes for having—perhaps really has—some twenty or thirty thousand a-year. An intelligent little boy, who acted as our guide, evidently looked upon him as the first of men; he had three fine carriages, he said, and six fine horses, and a saloon! "all the same as in a palace," the bare mention of which seemed to fill him with awe. We were content to take his fair report, and a view of the exterior,—a gay exterior, painted all over, after the southern fashion, with a crowd of red and yellow pilasters and arabesques, and a crowning belvidere, party-coloured like the rest of the building, with a gallant ship on the top of it. Our boy had no higher idea of splendour; it was to him what the tinsel robe of the miraculous image is to the poor nun who has never been beyond the walls of her convent.

Walked in a garden attached to a large house, let (I believe) in apartments, where we saw the palm tree, banana, guava, sugar-cane, bamboo,

odoriferous lemon, and a multiplicity of rare and delicate plants flourishing in the open air. Orange-gardens of great extent,—superb trees laden with fruit, and amongst them a particular species of the bigarron, said to be curious, and various plants familiar to our green-houses in a dwindled shape, but that have here the strength and size of shrubs.

The plains of Hyères might pass on a poetical fancy for the garden of the Hesperides, all vegetable gold—or will be soon, for the oranges, though large, are not yet quite ripe. But these orange-gardens, like the olive-groves and vineyards, sound better than they look; formally planted in dumpy rows and enclosed within stone walls, they appear, at a little distance and when seen from a height, like nursery-grounds; and sometimes like over-peopled grave-yards, which the vying hands of posthumous affection had crowded with green memorials. Hyères is the native place of Massillon, that great prelate whose pulpit eloquence made a mighty monarch look into himself. "Father, (said Louis XIV. to him,) when I hear other preachers, I am pleased with them; but when I hear you, I am displeased with myself."

When people talk of Hyères as a place for invalids, they usually say, "the island of Hyères;" but the island or islands—for there are three which from their close vicinity may be said to belong to it, are uninhabited,—perhaps uninhabitable, though there is something like a fort on one of them. The town has some trade in oil, wine, and oranges, and its beautiful flowers are sent to Marseilles and Toulon; it is probably a sweet winter place, and indeed looks as if it could not have any thing to do with that ungentle season; but whether it was the gloomy day, or the gloomy associations which belong to a spot where so many come to die,—even though others may find healing in it, or whether it was both put together that sicklied it over, I know not; but there was a shade of something deeper than melancholy on it that dimmed its beauty,—at least we thought so.

Fruit and flowers seem to be all and every thing at Hyères; if you ask what is to be seen, you are told, fruit and flowers,—that is, orange-gardens and rare plants; if you inquire in what the trade of the place consists, you are answered, in fruit and flowers; and if you look about, the eye every where rests on fruit and flowers.

Saw some pretty women at Hyères, and a beauty on the road with the velvet eyes that one often meets with in the south, and which, if one may venture to say a thing so fanciful, seem to feed by their rich warmth the amazing eyelashes that soften their lustre. A pleasant country, from Toulon to Hyères: returned by a yellow sunset, with a streaking of iron-coloured clouds which set it off prodigiously. Gardens enriched by a variety of trees, which make beauty if they do not find it; and on an isolated hill the ruins of a fort, or what looks like one, with a fine purple mountain going to sleep behind it. Kitchen-gardens in beautiful order, watched and dressed like flower-knots: the *potager* seems a chief care in the south of France; yet at the hotels fruit and vegetables are often sparingly served, and not always of the best quality, with the exception however of figs and olives, which are sure to be excellent. At dessert, the grapes are frequently of a poor flavour and unripe, though sold so cheap, that we have bought, at Montpellier and other places, more than five persons could eat for five sous, and of a most delicious quality. But a dinner, always excellent and varied with considerable skill, is sure to put the hungry

traveller in such good humour, that the meagre dessert is rarely growled at. All wines may be commanded, but the common wine (*vin ordinaire*) of the south is excellent.

Proportions considered, there are almost as many bastides at Toulon as at Marseilles, and a few Italian porches with the slight piasters supporting the roof of vines, but not enough to make a feature, or indeed to be remarked. We left the busy town early, passing through Valette, a stirring looking place, and admiring the gracefully irregular surface of the country and the hills – not verdant, but coated with an enamel of their own, in which I find considerable beauty.

Met a river at Sollies, with fresh trees about it: it was a pleasant sight and we hailed it joyfully, which showed that we had seen nothing but the dry bed of one for some time. As the road ascends, the ground beneath looks like a vast garden, walled in by irregular hills: this is very much the general aspect of the country, the wall is nearer or more distant—it is rocky, fantastically indented, or covered with pines; there is a village boldly perched upon a hill, or hitched against it—perhaps a ruin; the garden surface is flatter or

more varied, as it may happen, but the same character always predominates.

Still garden culture; much field-work done by the spade, and of hoeing and dibbling by the women. At length we find the olive spreading out into something like a tree; those which are removed from the dust of the road have a deep green hue that mixes well with the golden vine, but we have fewer vines now, and sometimes grass fields and dear homely features mixing with foreign ones. A regular hedge of pomegranates near to Cuers,—and a fête at it; women praying in the churches, and men gossiping in the streets. Holiday gaiety in France is of a quiet cast; it consists in grave talk and graver dancing. The French are a cheerful people, easily amused but not exuberant, except perhaps in speech—I do not mean *professions*, for there we do them great injustice; they are decorous in their enjoyments, but suit the feeling to the word more aptly perhaps than others whose mirth is of a more undrest kind.

Beautiful hills as we advance, and deliciously coloured: pomegranates again growing wild in the banks, and daisies sown into the grass with a May-

day profusion. For some time past the hedges have had an exotic look, but I know too little of botany to distinguish any thing through the ten-fold coat of dust that encrusts every leaf, except my old friend the unexotic blackberry. But here again are the dear grass fields, and pear and cherry trees: the lemon and pomegranate, the fig and olive with which they mix, speak of distance; but a pear or a cherry tree brings the orchard or the homestead, the village stile and the hawthorn bush, full before us; and with them such sweet thoughts of home and gleamings of its fair domestic scenery, that we almost scent the perfume of the flowers which we have gathered in its fields when our old years were new. O for those dear old years! Many a time has a tuft of violets in a road-side hedge, a smell of weeds burning, the crowing of a cock, the hammering of a village-joiner, the fire-light gleaming through the cottage casement or the open door at evening,—even the slow creeking of the labouring cart-wheel brought you bounding back again to knock at my heart, and find it jumping out to meet you at the first pressure of the spring, like the gilt lady in a Dutch clock-case.

Passed Carnoules, Luc, Vidauban, to Muy, where we arrived at nightfall, and found comfortable beds. I can never judge of any thing at sunset hour, or the charming moments that precede it, when the last beams raying out over the tops of the mountain, hill, or forest behind which it is sinking, act like magic on the scene. Then the brown earth becomes imbued with a softer and deeper brown, the green leaves grow purer and more transparent, the distant uplands seem of a richer and more ingrained purple; it might perhaps be owing to this same magic, but the country about Luc, and onward to Muy, seemed to me all pleasantness. Agreeable about Muy; frequent streams, and trees more varied and vigorous than usual: the olive, so long first fiddle, drops gradually into an accompaniment; magnificent alders as we advance towards Fréjus, and the ruins of an amphitheatre just at its entrance. This Fréjus, the birth-place of Julius Agricola, and which belongs to modern history by the disembarkation of Napoleon after his Egyptian eclipse;* and again

* Fréjus, though the spot always named, was not the actual one; but the little port of St. Raphael, half a league distant.

by its being the spot from which, in another page of his eventful history, he sailed for Elba, has still some records of its Roman masters. Besides the amphitheatre, there are the fragments of an aqueduct and the remains of a temple scattered over its fields and gardens, giving it an antique appearance, greatly helped out by the stately character and durable verdure of the marine pine. It is the tree for ruins; we may fancy it coeval with them,—it belongs to the past, the present, and the future, and seems to stand by bearing witness to the splendour of which it has partaken, and whose remains are still decorated by its monumental beauty.

Certain chroniclers, who deal in the marvellous, make mention of a church on a summit of a mountain, not a great way from Fréjus and near to Catignac, as happy in the possession of a remarkable picture, which may, or may not, be there still, for any thing I know, not having made the pilgrimage.

I have said a picture; but the story that hangs upon it is the point. Louis the Thirteenth having been married three-and-twenty years, and being still childless, began to despair. So did not a cer-

tain barefooted friar, who so beset the Virgin with supplications, giving her no rest night or day, that she at last, probably to get rid of the importunities of the eternal Fiacre, (for so he was named,) appeared to him, and having ordained that the queen should perform a certain number of *neuvqines* in her honour, granted his petition; and to prove that he was not under the influence of an illusion, manifested herself to him under the same form in which she was (and perhaps may be still) represented in the church of Nôtre Dame des Graces, being the same church on the top of the mountain of which I have already spoken.

The holy Fiacre fled off to verify, and finding the likeness exact, bore witness before the mighties, prophesying boldly (as well he might) the birth of the *grand monarque*, which memorable event took place in the course of the ensuing year.

Whilst I have been telling my story, my wealth of pines has been gradually giving way to groves of cork trees, that come with their Spanish associations, and their ilex colouring and form spreading darkly over the hills. Every branch has a page of some roving life hung upon it, and one cannot look at it without thinking of the wine-skin and

the wallet, the cheese-crusts and more savoury though half-demolished pasty, which we have seen—with our eyes of romance, devoured under its shade.

The pass of Lestrelles is the loveliest of mountain passes,—magnificent is the word in general, or sublime, or awful, but this is lovely; such sylvan views over the mountains and the sea, with fine stretches of wood, and a fore-ground like a botanic garden run wild. The rocks are covered with the arbutus, now in the perfection of its flower and fruit; its pure and delicate blossoms, like small bells of virgin wax, hang on the same branch with its rich scarlet and bright amber berries, almost effacing by their prodigal beauty the innumerable tribes of graceful and aromatic plants, that cover the earth as if they were mere butter-cups and daisies; we have the carriage filled with them, and Colville's green-houses in the month of May are not more redolent than our November bouquets. What delight to pass on such a day through such a country, the eye roving over mountains that rise up tier above tier till they dissolve into the heavens, the balmy atmosphere, the pure sky and rich details,—sometimes the sea, always the mountains. What religion is in such a

picture—what a voice in its solitude! If the soul be not purified by the contemplation of such scenes, it is not because the characters in which their great origin is written are faint and doubtful; the mighty name covers them from the sky down to their roots in the earth, and he who will not read must shut his eyes upon it. The road is excellent, it winds in a fine terrace round the hills: game abounds,—I mean of the gentler kind, but both wild boars and wolves find a retreat in the farther depths of the forest.

So did robbers formerly; but a band, posted in ambush to attack the carriage of some Italian prince, was surprised and taken; and since then, travellers have passed in safety. At length, our terrace descends gently amidst cork trees, and dark hills that open as if to let in gleams of mountains faintly crayoned on the sky: towards the post-house of Lestrelle, the hills have a more inhabited character; here the sea opens with the port and town of Cannes, three posts distant, glittering in the sunbeams. Stopped to change horses at a solitary house in a romantic situation, with three or four fine elms before the door; a quiet pretty spot, but with something of a smuggling

air about its whispering silence. As we approach Cannes, where we think of passing our eight days of quarantine, we look round for the marshes whose vicinity has given an unhealthy reputation to the town; but if they ever existed, they are now drained and fruitful, and we can see nothing but cultivated fields and pleasant ones, with now and then perhaps a few rushy tufts, or a little of that irregular knotty vegetation which indicates a wet soil. But here the earth is as dry as pepper; so we advance boldly amidst scenes of great sweetness and beauty, the heaths, and arbutus, and myrtles of Lestrelles still following us: neat dwellings and meadows flowery even now, with the shining sea before us, and the fine line of rocks that stretches out into it going off from our right. Here again are the beautiful pines of Italy, not round, and buttony, and crowded together as we have sometimes seen them on our journey, but spreading out their wide umbrellas, and turning a depth and fulness of verdure to the sun, for whose beauty one cannot find a word.

I have talked before and often of these pines, but I never look at them without renewed delight; they have a language of their own, whose undula-

tions are at once majestic and melancholy: were I obliged to name a single object which might image solitude, power, and fate,—the desert, the sceptre, and the tomb, I think I should choose one of those uncompanionable, lofty, and monumental trees. There is a knoll at a short distance from Cannes, an island-looking thing, stranded there perhaps in sport, on some forgotten day when the waves were in a frolic mood; it might be bound round with a ribbon, yet its compactness has nothing formal in it, but on the contrary a beautiful poetic flow. A group of the most graceful pines that I have ever seen grow on it, their swelling lines are broken by the pyramidal tops of a few tall cypress, amongst which some other trees of summer leaf and loveliness have crept in, as if by chance. In Pagan times, it would have passed for the tomb of a Dryad; and Poussin, had he journeyed this way, would have stolen it for his Arcadia. Nearer to Cannes these trees again appear, forming a natural grove along a sandy shore,—a lonely shore without a living thing upon it; the trees stand apart as if they would shun each other, and the sun pours its descending rays through the bare trunks slantingly. Beneath their spreading heads appear the

sea; and the islands of St. Marguerite and St. Honorat—lonely-looking now, but which once swarmed with monks as a hive does with bees, seem to float on its surface.

There is something very oriental in the scenery of this part of Provence. I cannot look at this desert strand without thinking of some old long-ago story of the pirate island or the lonely bark, and going over again in thought all those fond sad tales of Turkish girls and Moorish maidens,—Zaides and Zoraymas, which hold their influence over minds, tenacious like my own of early fancies, much longer than perhaps in decency they ought to do. Aloes begin to show themselves here; they are the first that we have seen, or at least remarked; I cannot however say, that they may not have a more northern existence. In running along a road, many things escape the eye which looks one way, while the very thing it seeks for happens to be on the other. No plant gives a more foreign aspect to a landscape than the aloe; its pale unusual green, and large sword-like leaf—so different from the tender verdure and flexible foliage of our perennial plants, assign it to another sun and more enduring nature than we are blessed with.

Just in time to seize upon a small apartment in an hotel close to the sea; an hour later and we should have been consigned to the hay-loft, or obliged to jog on in the dark to Antibes. And now we are making ourselves comfortable, which we always contrive to do wherever we are, and shall here, I have no doubt, in spite of the quarantine.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CANNES—THE MISTRAL—THE IRON MASK—THE ISLAND OF ST. MARGUERITE—THE PEOPLE—FISHING-BOATS—THE PAYROLADE—THE COCKLE-GATHERERS—THE SABBATH OF THE HEART—COMFORTS—THE BASTIDE—PALM TREES—NAPOLEON—SILENCE AND SPEECH OF MOUNTAINS—A HERMIT.

NOVEMBER 3rd. This "city of our solemnities" is a very pretty place, though somewhat fishy; delicious walks, fine sea views—and land ones, and a beautiful little picture of a port, though not a safe shelter in stormy weather. The town extends its thin crescent round its head, and the line of houses, (some gaily painted,) with a broad walk and two rows of trees before them which front the sea, have a very agreeable effect. There is some stir on the beach, and several sloops, light brigs, and lighter feluccas, lie at anchor within the bay; while boats laden with fruit, oil, and other country produce, are continually passing between the vessels and the shore. Sardines are salted here in

immense quantities for exportation, but figs are the chief article of commerce: large cargoes are sent to Languedoc, and to many of the Mediterranean ports of the south of France. The hills about Cannes are warmly wooded, the olives of a superb growth, and the buildings scattered amongst them very white and villa-like at a distance, though probably only barns, or rough farm-houses at best.

4th. Sea dark and billowy, with a touch of the mistral. The vessels in port, seeing it gathering in the distance, sailed out just in time to take shelter in a safe nook of La Marguerite, as the sailors familiarly call the saint or her island; and now it comes booming over the waves, while they make sea-horses, and lash with manes and tails against the shore,—not like the mild and tideless Mediterranean, but like the fierce ocean itself. Quite a Brighton day, when the casements are blown in, and showers of spray driven in after them.

At this moment a ship passes, cutting its way through the waves, and leaving a line of foam behind it; like the leviathan in the book of Job, "he maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary." What a splendid image! there is no talking of little things after it.

Last April the mistral came suddenly without sound of preparatory shell, and dashed eight vessels against the shore, where they all went to pieces. It was within port: many perished, and in sight of their wives, parents, and children, who stood by and could give no help. What a sight! how many deaths were in it for the survivors!

A ship founders at sea: we have friends in it; the news reaches us slowly, but at length it comes. It is before us,—the fierce night, or the still more ghastly morning; we see the lifting up of the waves till they make one with the heavens; we hear the death shriek, and see the shrinking back of nature from the deep and dismal tomb; but the time for help is gone by, and even while imagination broods over those living horrors, reason feels that the suffering has long been over, and the dead at rest. Thus bringing us a melancholy consolation, almost without our knowing from whence it is derived.

But the actual sight! the moment between life and death, when a rope, a plank, a hand might save—to see it all,—and yet feel that you are powerless,—O Lord, how horrible!

Formerly I used to think of the man in the iron

mask as of something gentlemanlike and romantic, something in fine linen and point ruffles, with a kind of net-work vizor, and a melancholy indescribable eye gleaming through it. But since I have seen Lockroy rivetted up at the Odéon, the miserable real wretch has possessed himself of my imagination, and stands bolt upright before me whenever I turn my eyes towards his island prison, that melancholy memorial with the hideous history of despotism trampling down individual liberty storied on it. The island of St. Marguerite is opposite to our windows, and at no great distance from shore: had the weather been favourable, we should have gone over and looked at it, but squalls make some sick and frighten others, and we have had nothing else for the last two or three days The civilities which pass between Macbeth's witches would be superfluous at Cannes;

> "I'll give thee a wind
> That is kind;
> And I another."

Here every one may have a wind without asking for it.

This is a sweet place even now, and in a softer season, when the leaves are all out, must be a sort

of sea paradise: its thoroughly country air, quiet, and cheerfulness, are perfectly delicious; and then the people seem so good and civil, with a pleasant kind of joyous simplicity about them exceedingly prepossessing Here are no beggars, at least no demonstrative ones, but all are employed in some sort of industry: the girls knit, embroider, and are excellent workwomen; gather the orange-flowers, help to salt sardines and anchovies; and in summer-time, when the day's work is over, make a promenade of the high road which overlooks a delightful scene, and each with her stocking and her ready needle in her hand, knit, gossip, and take the *frais*, till night sends them home again. Every summer Sunday there is a rustic ball on a platform, somewhere, I think, in or about the old castle premises, where the *branle* is performed, and I should think featly, judging by the *svelte* air of the girls.

At Paris, on a holiday, every decently dressed female tries to have a bêau,—nothing but pairs, *chacun avec sa chacune*, except it be a regular family group, generally consisting of a babe or two in a little cart, dragged on by the father and followed by an elder one, a Léon or an Achille, who though tugging by his mother's cotillion, already

wears the uniform of the national guard; or a Victoire, whose *chacun* is still in embryo, pinched into a bonnet, the reduced duplicate of her mother's. But the country folks have other modes; and while the girls gather together in one corner, the males congregate in another. All the men here are, or look like sailors or fishermen; "laouse la mar, ten-ti à terro,"—praise the sea, stick to the earth, is an old Provençale proverb, to which they seem to give but a half hearing. Even the children, boys and girls, spend the greatest part of their time knee-deep in the sea, and the rest shell-gathering in the sands. The people of Cannes seem to doat on their little town, and its belongings; some girls, a score at least, who thronged round us this afternoon as we sat by the road side, appeared to consider our praise of it as a matter of course, and to be as well convinced that it was of all earth's spots the fairest, as the Moors were that paradise was in that part of the heavens immediately over Granada. Two of the gayest had been to Marseilles, and with kind relations too; but its crowds and gaieties sorrowed their hearts, and after three months, they returned again to the fishing-boats and fisher-boys of their beloved Cannes.

Talking of the fishing-boat, it is here a kind of workhouse; men, women, children, hire one for the night from its owner, who steers and sees that all's right; while the crew fish for their supper, or try a chance for the next day's fare. When the season favours, a number of these boats are seen gliding out from shore one by one in the still of evening; and after a night of good or ill success, returning in the early morning usually all together, making a home-bound fleet that needs no Cuyp to turn it into picture. There the boy gets his first notion of a mariner's life, and makes fearless fellowship with the sea; and the old, to whom habit has made a bench the same thing as a bed, give themselves a chance of food not got by begging. The payrolade, of which old writers speak, is still a custom in many parts of the Mediterranean coast of France; when the boats which have waited till day-break cast their nets a little before the rising of the sun, and if they drag them out heavily laden, land under the rocks or upon the smooth strand, and kindling a fire, boil part of their haul in the sea-water, and make a merry meal (a payrolade) of it. How all this recalls to my mind the moonshiny evenings when,

in early days, I have sat listening to the songs of the cockle-gatherers, keeping time to the blythe measure of their oars, as they pushed into the sea-shore creek where their huts were nestled, or glided along with the silver line that lay glittering on the waters, making rough music that still had charm in it when young voices took the lead; and the fisher-girls made the air ring with the brisk couplet that often, in the full tide of its joyousness, sunk as if it could not help it into that plaintive movement, which may be called the natural melody of their land. I was a dreamer then; and when I have watched those boats passing between me and the lady-moon, what things I have thought! what visions my cockle-gatherers have become! They were no longer the real fishermen and maidens, but the reflections of my own mind, and as full of illusions as that mind was then.—Alas!

Which alas! puts me in mind of a story told me to-day of a baby fifteen months old, whose country nurse, wishing to bring her to reason after a little fit of *espièglerie*, told her that when she went home to her Paris mamma, she would be punished for such things; upon which she crossed

her little arms, and, looking up gravely in the good woman's face, said "*Hélas!*" I do not know whether any one else may think this as pretty as I did,—perhaps not.

O the sweet sabbath of the heart! when it opens to the worship of nature, when released from week-day toil it goes abroad into the fields among the things which it loved in its childhood,—for the heart has its childhood, and if it grows old without growing hard, it is because it has kept alive the remembrance of that dear season, and still holds to the hope then strong within it. It is the same hope, though its object has been changed; then it was the hope of life's joys, and as life narrows it becomes the hope of something better: it came from heaven to the child, and promises heaven to the man. I love the bell that calls to prayer, and the village-church opening its doors to the devout, the innocent, and the aged; I love to see the great of this world seeking the quiet altar, and kneeling at it with the lowly; but the town chapel, the ticketed seat, the modish preacher! the beadle, the stocks, the unfelt but over-acted sanctity, rob the sabbath of its most

beautiful and affecting attributes, and substitute conventional forms for that heart-felt piety which converts every thought into praise. The true heart's incense is the involuntary prayer, thankful for the breath of heaven, thankful for the day of rest, thankful above all for the great promise,—the death from which comes life; and though it is good to pray "where two or three are gathered together," yet is not the whole sabbath a prayer and a thanksgiving to him who, having closed the door of his silent dwelling which for six days had echoed to the voice of labour, goes out into the fields, and hears the hymn of birds, and breathes the breath of flowers, and sees the vapour purpling on the hills and the bright sun in the heavens, and thinks of Him who made them all, that we might love Him in his works, and seeing them, rejoice and be glad?

To-day is Sunday, and the very birds tell us so, at least I can almost fancy it; they sing as if they believed it summer, helping out the rich chorus of nature, in which we find the first principles of harmony, the fusion of various and (as it would seem) opposing sounds into one full accord. In this general blend the noise of waters, the whistling

winds, the carol of the lark, the cry of the curlew, the grating of the crow, the song of the nightingale, and the thousand other sounds that fill the air, fall into each other and form a liquid swell of perfect harmony, produced by the nice adjustment of unisons and discords.

As we roved about in the vineyards by the road side, a woman came towards us, holding a small basket of the sweet, but too powerfully scented blossoms of the cassia. She offered them to us pressingly, and then would insist on our visiting her bastide, that looked down upon us from an upper vineyard. The view from its terrace we found enchanting; it takes in the embayed shore, the yellow strand with the tall pines upon it, that talked romance to me when I first saw them, and many other sweet and beautiful things; but the most beautiful are the rocks that run out into the sea sheltering the rest, and when the sun sinks behind their illuminated ridge, look like a thin screen, through which the light seems bursting. There is no describing these sunsets, nor the broken outline of these magnificent rocks with the dying lights upon them. I often stand to watch their last glow, or their preceding brightness, when

the cloud-palaces of heaven are all glory, and then turn homewards, thanking the gentle November day that allows me to do so; for now that our spell of mistral is over, the wind speaks in whispers, and the sky in the true sun-beams of Provence.

"The French have no idea of comfort," say the English, and adduce as a proof the want of a word in their language which expresses it. This reasoning is not, however, conclusive; for instance, we have no word to express *ennui*, yet are strongly suspected of being intimately acquainted with its meaning. But certainly, whatever all-over carpets, improved doors that shut tightly, rectified chimneys, luxurious chairs, and the best beds in the world may do for Paris and the provincial capitals, still the humbler habitations continue frequently to exhibit that utter nakedness, which indicates a positive unacquaintance with the meaning of our comfortable word comfort.

I do not speak of luxuries; whatever this or former ages have produced, whatever taste has sanctioned—of rare, costly, or splendid, has contributed, while its mode held, to the embellishment of the rich saloon, or the luxurious boudoir: all

kinds of ease-insuring or inviting forms are there to *dorloter* the voluptuary :—I do not speak of these, but of the less obtrusive comforts whose base is order, and whose incentive is the love of home, which teaches us to find out all things that can endear and beautify it ; and, amongst others, those little noiseless, nameless elements, which without putting themselves forth under any particular form, are the main ingredients of household consistency, and not the least efficient of household charms. But this love of home must exist before the dear fire-side, the bright hearth, the neat, though frugal meal, the sense of propriety which gives to every thing its appropriate place, can be found in the dwellings of the humbler classes.

The bastide was a chapter on this text, yet the good woman seemed proud of it. It consisted of one room with a sort of hay-loft over it, such as is sometimes seen in the porters' niches at Paris: the actual possessors were an army of cocks and hens, who fled up and down at pleasure, lighting and roosting, if they fancied it, on the three or four broken chairs which constituted the whole of the furniture. There was not even an accompanying table, or a three-legged stool ; but the mistress

saw no deficiency, neither did her father,—a kind old man whom we met in the vineyards; yet they were decent people, apparently in easy circumstances, and seemed to know the value of their beautiful situation, of which a little attention to neatness and ordinary comfort would have made a paradise.

Only one palm-tree here that I have seen, and that looks sick and has its head bound up; but abundance of aloes, making family parties in the hollows of the rocks. Delightful views every where —from church, strand, hills; quite a Paul and Virginia country, as we say, a Tommy and Harry story. I have talked of one palm tree, and have just been told that they are numerous; to prove which our hostess has taken me into her garden, where there are two, one about three feet high, and the other about twice as many inches. Children, probably, of the aforesaid sick mother, but puny ones, though she called them beautiful, and ran on about their fine promise, as if they were of the very best growth of Lebanon.

By the by, that growth was of cedars. As to the palms, if they are easily propagated, one year's truth may be the next year's story. Corinne saw

but one palm at Rome, that fair and lonely tree in the garden of the Capucin convent; there was another, however, in the Prieuré de Malte which she did not see, neither did I, but always believed in the single blessedness of that beautiful tree until lately. Perhaps the palms of Hyères may be hidden in the grass, and while I talk doubtingly of their existence may be growing up step by step into stateliness, as if purposely to convict me of injustice or stupidity.

Another Brighton day, but of a different kind; an evening in the beginning of September, when the shrimpers are out scraping against the rocks, crossing the sunbeams waist-deep in the waters, and wading on with their long poles like sea witches. We have had a little rain, the first that has fallen for eight months, and the people are all out in the fields rejoicing and making the most of this rare blessing. The country is all perfume, which word makes me think of Grasse, a small town two leagues off in the hills, that sends its sweets, and used to send its dressing-boxes lined with bergamot, all over Europe: those who prefer a street to the sea-shore may, if they please, perform quarantine amongst its hard and soft poma-

tums, and many do so, and are (I think) wrong; for what is extrait de mousseline, verveine, or réséda, compared with the bright sea-shore and the rocks with the last sunbeam on them? Besides, we live like Neptune, and grow nice amongst the big and little fishes, despising tunny and making little of John Dory, which would have lured John Quin to the Land's End. Along the line of coast from Toulon to the Golfe de Juan, we find landmarks which indicate some of the chief points in the story of the most extraordinary man of this, or almost any other age. At Toulon, Napoleon Buonaparte started for his great career: at Fréjus he landed from Egypt, and from thence pressed forwards to a throne: there also did he embark for Elba, after having abdicated his right to its possession; and here, and for the last time, did he again land in France, in the lonely Golfe de Juan, from whence he passed on to downfal as he had done before to glory.

The mightiest of the mighty did not disembark here, as has been generally thought, but in the Golfe de Juan, about a league distant. That night there were no stars in the heavens; the sky was dark and ominous, as if the after story of the battle-field, and the lonely rock, was written on it.

He did not enter a house, but reposed before a large fire kindled on the strand, or strode up and down along the shore. His presence caused no sensation; the people recognised him and were silent—whether from the presence of fear, or the absence of affection, we could not learn.

The inhabitants of Cannes are reputed peaceful; in all the horrors of the old revolution they toiled on, and remained quiet. What a blessing of a bay! to have preserved itself, like a pearl in an oyster-shell, in the midst of such a troubled ocean, —thinking of its figs and oranges, its fresh anchovies and pickled tunny, when the war-whoop resounded through the land, and people played at human life as children do at push-pin.

After which pithy reflexion I strolled out, rather in love with the people, and very much with the afternoon. There was a light in the heavens that opened every pore of the heart, and the small waves made such a sweet tale-telling, gossiping noise, as if every one had a sea story in it; the leaves too whispered, but the hills were silent. Mountains have no voices, and yet they cry aloud, and the heart hears them. How mysterious and how beautiful in its mystery is nature!

These are low mountains—summer ones; and

green; full no doubt of the hum of insect life, the carol of birds, the ravishing harmonies of nature, and sometimes of the voice of man. But in the deep solitudes of the higher regions how stupendous is the silence—and the sound, should any come, how awful! It is no common sound that breaks the dead stillness,—it is no sound of life; but some shock of nature, some giant that unloosens itself from the earth and falls headlong, some avalanche, which the passing breeze disengages from its hold and hurls forward; or it may be the voices of the heavens, the sweeping wind, or the grand and desolate thunder. How the mind works in such scenes, how it almost bursts with the thousand thoughts, the thousand emotions, that vanish if you try to arrest them; deep and soul-stirring, yet vague and fugitive as vapour,—like that they expand and fill up every crevice; but they refuse subserviency, and the moment the hand tries to note down what is present in the thought, all vanishes,—the chain is broken, the links scattered; the general sentiment alone remains, and the impressions, of which it was a moment before so full, are lost in the effort to retrace them.

Looked once more towards my pines of the lonely strand,—my seraglio garden;—I say *my*, for I am sure that no one ever loved them as I do; and then gathered a handfull of garden mignionette,—garden as far as look went, but a weed here, and scentless.

The south of France abounds in hermitages, many of the *baumes** are tenanted by holy men, who have still their followers. At Muy the landlady of the inn urged us to stay a day longer, that we might visit the hermit of the hills; a pious anchoret, who lives (according to her account) caved up something like La Fontaine's rat, who made himself a cell in a Dutch cheese:

> "La solitude était profonde
> S'étendant partout à la ronde;"

but we backed out of the scrape. Here the hermit came to visit us; but he was a mere beggar, who filled his wallet with scraps, and did not even affect the venerable.

Most people are satisfied with their proportion of talents, few with their social position; how often do we hear fortune abused, how, seldom nature. I have been just now gossiping with a

* Caverns, or grottoes.

man—evidently a very stupid, if not silly one, who observed, speaking of Napoleon, that he could have set him right in many of his notions, if he had been near him. This man, who was a small tradesman of the town, seemed rather ashamed of his station, and broadly intimated that fortune had not played him fair.

CHAPTER XXV.

CANNES TO ANTIBES—ANTIBES—ST. LAURENT—PASSPORT AND TONGS—HATS AND SPORTSMEN—NICE—CLIMATE—ILLUSIONS—THE OLIVE—CLIMATE AGAIN AND PEOPLE—ITALY AND NO ITALY—FAIRY BELLS—SKETCH OF NICE—OPERA—THE PHILOSOPHY OF TEMPER—DRIVES—WINTER VERDURE—THE FOREIGN GRAVE.

At length our eight days' quarantine is over; and though I say *at length*, I really feel a sort of regret at quitting this beautiful place, which I began by admiring, but now love. This is a country that awakens feelings kindred to its own beauty; that has something not only lovely, but loving, in it; that salutes you with gentle cheerfulness, and works into your heart with its foreign stories of sea and land, and its home sweetness; changing the hasty and sometimes cold feeling of admiration into the warmer one of sympathy,—sympathy more slow to awaken, but when roused, so tender and intense. It will not always come when we desire it; but when it does, how the bare earth

brightens into beauty, and the silent heart how it finds notes,—and sweet ones for its instinctive harmonies. Sympathy is love; examine love under any other influence, and you will find it an imperfect feeling. The passion of love, the love of nature, of the arts, of all that is good, great, or beautiful, is sympathy, and cannot be heart-felt unless it be so.

A continued garden to Antibes, (the ancient Antipolis,) and a charming one; vines, figs, oranges, almonds, pomegranates, (what a dessert enumeration) mixed up with myrtles, heaths, and a profusion of beautiful green things; with fine-marking walnut-trees, and superb olives stretching along the sea side, and following the curvings of its gracefully embayed shore. The mountains at a little distance are covered with snow, but here the air is all warmth and softness. Antibes seems a poor place, but agreeably put down, though not so delightfully surrounded as Cannes: it is said to be well fortified, and to possess some Roman remains. While we changed horses, a very fine young woman passed us in a dress that did not seem to belong to this country; and with her a shepherd, many years older than herself, of the

true patriarchal breed. A single sheep with a lamb beside it, made up the group; there was neither ass nor child,—had there been, the flight into Egypt would have been beautifully rendered.

A cold strand from Antibes, and stony; very aguish-looking. Snow mountains or grey ones, but nothing of the luminous blue glow upon them, or of the skyey tint which in warmer moments may lift them up into poetry. Immediate scenery of a quiet unimpressive character, the land scenery I mean, for the sea has always its power and glory. And now a gradual transition into groves of olives, some quite forest trees, and the town of Cujes hung high on its hill amongst oranges and aloes, and looking over woods of olives brightened up with trees of livelier leaf: it is a picture to look up to, and back upon. Hedges of pomegranate and other southern things, and good single trees, mixed every where with the olive—magnificent here, and whose arching branches make natural bowers by the road side.

Crossed a wooden bridge over the Var at St. Laurent, one half in Provence and the other in Piemont, with the Douane at its foot. Here our way was barred by "a limitary cherub," with a

conical auto-da-fé cap, and a broad scarlet band badged all over, like a rat-catcher's, across his shoulders, who bolted out upon us armed with a pair of tongs, with which he handled our passport as if it had been St. Dunstan's nose, and then passed it on to another, who received it (in the tongs) at arm's length. If there was any thing to dread between us, it was we who had cause for alarm, for, poor souls, both themselves and their marshes had fever and ague very legibly impressed upon their title-pages; while Dominique, who was the guardian of the passport, looked as fresh as a sea smuggler. But the official farce over, they proved to be very civil people, who gave us no sort of trouble; our passport was returned cured like a Dutch herring, all chance of cholera smoked out, and the books, which we feared would have been seized, not even looked at.

The women about Antibes, and sometimes at Cannes, wear a sort of hat like the Chinese boatmen with whom we get acquainted on bark fans and Indian screens, very much in the shape of an inverted milkpan, and lined usually with flowered cotton. I think Virginie might have worn one; it does not misbecome the palms and bamboos. By

the by, the canes, which I have just now magnified and beautified into bamboos, grow here in such abundance, that were there but a few tigers, there might be rare jungle sport: sportsmen are here in plenty. I have not seen so many in a day out of England,—fierce-looking gentry to be trusted with guns. Two have just now passed — half-clad, prowling figures, with an eager air about them, as if they would not be difficult about the game they tried their shot upon. After the Douane a pretty bit; then flat fields not now in beauty; a meagre strand; to the left tufted hills with villas in the woods; and towards Nice a thickening of gardens, sweet perhaps in the season of leaves and flowers, when the very briars are beautiful, and even now of pleasant aspect in their last thin garb of Bengal roses.

I shall say nothing about Nice, for the day grew bleak as we approached it, and the first view had neither warmth or colouring; the town, running up at each side of the dry bed of a river, looks like a scene in a play, and the houses like painted pasteboard. To-day the sea growls, and asks for rocks and castles; to-morrow it may be smooth, and then the pale green and the pale yellow pavilion,

with their delicate arabesques, and rainbow balconies, may become it better. I shall know more about it presently.

Eight days have passed, and not a sunbeam; nothing but wet clouds, dripping trees, and mire. The people, who have not had any rain for several months, crow; and we, who looked for an eternal summer, grumble, and are disappointed, perhaps unreasonably, at finding a gap in the circle of flowers which we fancied formed by the seasons at Nice, it was such a pretty illusion. But illusions are fast vanishing every where: kings are becoming citizens; what would have been called magic formerly, is now mechanism; and even the claims of the sun begin to be canvassed,—and still more, disputed, and so successfully, that some of the old licensed Phœbus establishments threaten to shut up for want of business,—Nice amongst the rest, which they say has traded upon a false credit, and is found out. Certain it is, that invalids do not recover here now, as in former times they were said to have done, and perhaps for the very reason that the illusion is destroyed. Hope does so much,

—and confidence,—both with mind and body; or rather with the one by the action of the other.

Another illusion;—the orange-groves, which we expected to see dipping into the Mediterranean, are all enclosed within stout stone walls, and separated from it by a broad strand; few even of the best houses have any view of the sea, except over the roofs of others; but the back look-out from many of those in the Croix de Marbre that have nothing to do with the sea, is still charming. The hills form a basin, within whose circle all fresh, green, and odoriferous things are enclosed: at this moment I look over its edge, and down upon a close carpet of orange trees, whose young shoots beautifully variegate the deeper green of the old leaves; the sloping sides are adorned with gay villas, and natural groves of olives scattered about gracefully, and behind rise the Maritime Alps, covered with snow.

I used to dislike the olive, but I have made up with it now. There is something airy and picturesque in the open spread of its branches, and often an unexpected richness in its deep colouring; it is not always blue, like the dwarf button-shaped tree of Montpellier or Nismes, from which indeed

the olive tree of Nice is as distinct, as the rugged bossy-trunked elder that flings its thick branches over the village pool is from a cauliflower. The olive here grows something like our fine old pear tree, and often attains an extraordinary size; we are told of one near to Villa Franca, the trunk of which measures twenty-two feet in circumference. One of the pleasantest features about Nice is its gardens; they are, even at this late season, enriched with an endless profusion of gay and glowing flowers, which almost perpetuate summer in defiance of the gloomy sky.

What with the cholera, or the dread of it, and the angry state of the political horizon, three-fourths of the strangers who have grafted themselves on France, have been frightened away from it; and one half of those who meditated an irruption into Italy, induced to turn back again when the exaggerated inconveniences of the quarantine stood before them. There are but few English here; formerly every nook was full, now many of the best things are empty: according to the newspapers, Nice is the rendezvous of the high Carlists, the general asylum of all mysterious or suspected political characters, and the chosen retreat of the

Buonaparte family, whose sole representative, however, (as far as she may be deemed one,) is the Duchess of Leuchtenberg, widow of Eugène Beauharnais, who resides with a sick daughter in a beautiful villa near to us.

The weather seems to be the great axis upon which every thing here turns; the sun shines, or the wind blows,—it is hot, or cold, or dry, or damp: whatever it may be, you are told of it a hundred times a-day. Some are interested for themselves, others for some invalid in their family; others, again, for the prosperity of the town, and these, being chiefly shop or innkeepers, are always anxious to convince strangers that the present season is without a precedent; that Nice has nothing to do with these turbulent gentlemen who play at four-corners in the heavens, as if they had every day a fresh wager on the Spaniard and his cloak; but belongs entirely to the gentler powers of the air, to whom these blusterers are only casual visitors.

November 19th. Within the last three days the old sky of Nice is come back again, in its robe of bright blue gorgeously damasked; and we have the sun dancing on the waters, and the soft air of

June, – and, alas! the flies too. The musquitoes are still vigorous: however, with the help of our *cousinieres*,* we can contrive to keep them out; but the double-headed, black-winged, or long green-tailed chimeras that buzz and float about here under the gentle name of flies, are awful: in summer the air must be peopled with them. Next to the flies, the worst thing here appears to me to be the people,—I mean the downright *people*, who are a wild, fierce, dirty-looking tribe, with Italian faces and (they say) French hearts; which means, that they love the French, and regret their sway. The women twist their long hair with black ribbon or velvet, and roll it round the head; when the hair is in good order the effect is pretty, but there are such heads—such tangled forests! And then the under drapery shaming the attempts at elegance in the upper story, and making pitiable contrast with the floating or the braided ribbons.

Sometimes a black or coloured net, with long tassels hanging down fantastically, encloses the hair, and a muslin handkerchief full trimmed is tied over it, marmotte fashion; when fresh, the effect is rather becoming, but particularly slat-

* Musquito curtains.

ternly if soiled. By its position at the smooth side of the Appenines, Nice should belong to France, but by many other tokens, and obvious ones, to Italy. The town is, I understand, greatly admired; to me it looks ragged and disjointed, more (as H—— observed) like the fag-end of a town, than a town itself. Too much of Italy here, and too little. No architecture, no arts, but more than enough of dirt, and—they say—bigotry; but this last charge is foisted backwards and forwards amongst the religious factions that divide the town and (as it is reported) make it sometimes an unpleasant residence for those who desire to worship God after their own hearts and convictions.

I have said that Nice is Italian in two points,—I might have said in many more. The great square (Piazza Vittoria) with its Italian arcades, the best houses with their painted balconies, the humbler ones with their sashless windows, with strings of maize, gourds, and garlick dangling from them, the summer vegetation in the heart of winter, the files of mules hung round with merry bells that jingle not untuneably, the shoals of priests—but a person to whom I made this remark

thought there was a paucity,—and the fine heads which occasionally present themselves, are all as Italian as the sky, when it is in good humour, which is not every day in the week, nor every hour in the day either—even when the sun shines.

Prodigious picture amongst the beggars, (still Italy,) from the loose cloak and flapped hat, to the white beard and wallet. I saw a man yesterday in a fine elaborate attitude, who contrived to beg with a decided air of nobleness,—a difficult thing; painters are obliged to place even Belisarius in repose, and make a mendicant of his guide, but this beggar stood like Jeremiah the prophet, in that arrogance of grief that seemed to say, "I am the man that hath seen affliction!"

The high road here is always encumbered with mules laden with small wine-casks, wood, salt-fish, &c.; the bell-jingling never ceases, not even at midnight. One who was intimately acquainted with the fairies tells us of the thirty-nine silver bells that were hung round the neck of their queen's palfrey when she cantered to Huntley-bank, and broke in upon the repose of Thomas the Rhymer. But had he lain awake here at night,—as I do sometimes, he would have sworn that thirty-nine

times thirty-nine were set in motion, and half a hundred Mabs galloping

> "Over hill, over dale,
> Through bush, through briar,
> Over park, over pale,
> Through flood, through fire."

There is something delightful in being awakened by the silver sound of these fairy bells, and while the moon shines in at the window, having all the magic of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* crossing one's brain, like a golden and transparent ray from some imaginary paradise. All this happened to me last night, and I thought then, as I do now, that there never was such a sun-lit, moon-lit, star-lit thing as that same dream: we go up into the air with it, and the wonder is, that after such a revel of the fancy, one has the heart to note down one's own dull thoughts and faint impressions.

The port of Nice hangs at its side like a child's pocket handkerchief. It is a pretty nook, but it must be found out, and adds nothing to the general effect. The marine view from the town itself is rarely animated by the *near approach* of vessels; "there is no galley with oars, neither does gallant ship pass hereby," or if it does, it must be like a

thief in the night season; for since we have been here scarcely a sail has shown itself, and when one does by chance appear, it is so distant as to seem like a shadow on the horizon. Not far from the port is a very fine terrace, which overlooks the sea, and receives all the sun of Nice on its broad pavement. On week-days it is little frequented, except by a few invalids, who sit and sun themselves like so many lizards on the benches; but on Sunday it is all glitter, like the showy side of an Indian screen; and all the peacocks of Nice trail their tails upon it, opening their green, blue, and golden eyes to the sunbeams. Alas! they are chiefly hen birds; except the tonsured crows, males seem as rare here as females at Swan River, or Van Dieman's Land.

A handsome theatre, but the performance something worse than indifferent. With the Carnival begin the general gaieties of Nice, but at present there is nothing but the opera. Last night we had the *Dame Blanche* in honour of Boieldieu, who was present, and bowed three times in return for the three rounds of applause with which he was greeted at the close of the last scene. The customary crown and customary strophe (in which the

intention was better than the verse) followed. Poor man! he looked as if he would willingly have dispensed with this burst of arranged enthusiasm; but popularity must pay its penalty, ('artful alliteration,') and his patience was most heavily mulcted. It is certainly hard upon an author to have his works forced down his throat in a gritty brown paper covering, and all have not the same easy swallow as Rossini is blest with,—the imperturbable Rossini, who can listen to his most delicious music roared out by the —— de ——, and even accompany it with a smile of complacency.

There are modest people, and even mild ones, who could not do it. The philosophy of temper is a fine science, and ought to be worked at in the schools with more earnestness than Greek or Latin. After all, what are Hesiod and Homer, Virgil and Cicero, amidst "the briars of this working-day world," compared with the vade-mecum of good humour! What is the meteor light of genius (I mean for home uses) compared with that equal ray in which the heart suns itself without fearing that, like many other and more brilliant apparitions, it may suddenly sink under a cloud, and be lost to us in the very moment of our admiration! Just like

our sky of Nice; while the sun beams upon us as if it had nothing to do but to warm this one particular spot, out rushes the wind, and turns all its good to evil.

I have never been well since I came here. Where health is concerned, (I would say, if an invalid were to ask my opinion,) take no man's word for a paradise, even a lemon and orange one, though it sounds so beautifully; believe neither sun or sky, for the one may shine and the other look as clear as truth, and yet there may be a touch of the *bise* lurking in its very brightness. This climate is certainly not a negative one; if it does not do good it is sure to do harm: people who can eat roast-beef in London, find chicken too exciting here. High authorities say that it is dangerous in cases where there is any tendency to inflammation, but beneficial in those of debility, extreme languor, and nervousness unattended by fever. Nice does not however depend entirely on the fame of its climate, and would, even were it sifted out of all its pretensions on that score, still allure by the beauty of its environs, its many conveniences, reputed cheapness, showy exterior, and air of good company; and I would add (consulting my own taste)

its exquisite and ever-blooming flowers, that almost efface the recollection of winter as they do its presence, though not always its secret influence.

The rides about Nice must (I should think) be delightful; but easy drives, and pleasant ones, are wanting here, as in most sea-coast places. The first two or three miles of the Genoa road, (one of the regular *airings*,) are steep and tedious, but overhanging sparkling, and beautiful scenery; but the return by the same route,—the descent on Nice, is really splendid. The bay graciously developed, the bold rocks of Lestrelles stretching their long line into the sea, and bringing out by their depth and firmness the gay, green, inhabited beauty of the immediate scene, the deep valley over which the road hangs, dark with woods, gay with villas, hamlets, gardens,—the river losing itself at one end in the folds of the mountains, at the other in the sea, the town, the fortress, form a bright and harmonious combination, in which each particular part lifts and sustains the others. Another, and a still steeper drive, is that to Villa Franca,—a sea-port, three quarters of a league from Nice; the ascent is almost dangerously sharp, but highly rewarding. The romantic château of

St. André has its repaying coin also, but the road (or a great part of it) is a rumble through the stony bed of the shrunk Paglion; and that to the monastery of Cimiés and its Roman ruins,* is perhaps still worse. If you turn towards Turin, nothing interesting comes within the limits of a drive; and the popular corso is a dull and marshy league between the town and the dogana of St. Laurent.

But the beautiful thing of Nice itself is its winter verdure. The sober and uniform colour of the olive is relieved by the young tint of the orange tree, and by the bright hue of that fine evergreen the caroubier, which, with many others, decorate the hills. Late as it is, (15th of December,) the gardens are still glowing. The English chapel is surrounded by an inclosure of roses, and the poor stranger who comes to die here, sleeps in his distant grave amidst the bloom and fragrance of a thousand flowers.

We may live happily in a foreign land, surrounded by those we love;—where indeed may we

* The remains of the ancient city of Cemenelion, the metropolis of the Maritime Alps, destroyed by the Lombards.

not do so, carrying with us the ties of home, and thinking that we have but to veer round when we wish it, and we are sure to find it in the old place ready to receive us? If the sun of this foreign land be brighter, the air softer, the scenes more vivifying than our own, we consider such things as sureties of life and fresh means of enjoyment; but there is something very sad in the thought of dying in it. To be left behind in unknown company, lying in earth that never will be pressed by home footsteps, with a heavy stone upon one's breast whose inscribed name will never be repeated by a familiar voice, never dwelt on with the tenderness of memory, seems so sad. It is vain to say the dead do not know their loneliness; but the living feel it, the living who loved, and yet must leave them,—and the dying too, whose mournful forebodings anticipate, in those trembling moments when the weakness of human nature overcasts the courage of hope, the utter solitude of the foreign grave.

How many young hearts moulder beneath the fresh roses and the green grass of this English grave-yard,—young, dear, and cherished! and the fair forms that once made shrines for them—all

dust! but living still while life holds in the faithful memory of the mothers who brought them here in hope, and left them here in sorrow. Poor mothers! how must they feel, who return alone to the home where the dear face is seen no longer, and think of the lonely grave in the far-off land of the stranger!

A profound thinker and admirable writer* says, "Man is a noble animal: splendid in ashes, pompous in the grave." Yes, to the world in which his name finds a temple erected to its glory; but not to the heart, which seeing all that was a moment before great or lovely sink into the tomb, feels that the lesson of fate is one of humiliation. The grave subdues worldly pride, by revealing to us the weakness of man; but proclaims the goodness of God, by opening to us a way to the glory of angels.

* Sir Thomas Brown.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LA CORNICE — MONACO AND MENTONE — THE PILGRIMS— FAMILY LOVE — VINGTIMIGLIA — WELLS AND PALMS— CLOUD ISLANDS — ST. REMO — MY DORMITORY — BEGGARS —PORTO MAURIZIO — ONEGLIA — CORSICAN BOARS — THE ROAD — IMPEDIMENTS — ALLASSIO — THE MERCHANTMAN —BEGGAR-GIRL — ALBENGA — CRAVASOPA — THE MEDITERRANEAN — ITS GLORY — FINALE — NOLI — SAVONA— THE PRIEST — NOISE — ITALIAN BEGGARS — ITALY — COGOLETTO — COLUMBUS — A MAY DAY — LAST SWEEP OF THE CORNICE — CHARACTER OF SCENERY — INFLUENCE OF CLIMATE, ETC. — APPROACH TO GENOA — ADIEU — CONCLUSION.

An hour ago we left Nice glittering in the warm sunbeams of December, (which might pass for midsummer for any thing that the flowers or the sky say to the contrary,) the biting mistral fast asleep, and all the little zephyrs flirting their perfumed fans, and playing spring vagaries. As we advance along the road to Genoa, the surface of the hills is cut into terraces, zone above zone, propped by walls, and cultivated in every spot susceptible of culture. After a sweep through

the mountains, the sea opens again upon us, and we find ourselves on the famous Cornice, the beautiful Riviera of Genoa, looking down at the beautiful port of Villa Franca, with its narrow wooded line running out into the waters; its boats seeming to us like nutshells gliding from shore to shore, and its olive trees touching the sea. The blue Mediterranean is not blue to-day, but a mild slate-colour, crossed by such sunbeams! As we creep along, overhanging the little bays where the waves make room for themselves under the rocks, it is as if we were stealing a march on the Naïades, and surprising the secrets of their coral caves. Such a light upon the still sea! a soft roseate tint melting into lilac, and overcast with an amber shine, like the shifting hues of the mother-of-pearl shell.

Never was any thing like the colouring of this coast, or the beautiful boldness of its sweeping outline. Every town, every village, forms a separate picture, perfect in its way. Eza has its rock-like castle, Turbia its Roman ruin Gothicized, (very original,) and Roccabrunne its fine detached rocks, that have slid down in some forgotten shock and then stopped short, as if pur-

posely to give a romantic air to the houses that hang about amongst them. Pretty little Monaco lies below, gently lifted up upon its tiny promontory; but its prince does not care how it looks: he loves Paris, and leaves the Tritons to their sports, and his subjects to their own devices.

Nothing more sage, however, than the self-government of the good people of Monaco, who, according to our host here at Mentone, are models of propriety, who never get farther than the galleys; no capital punishment has been inflicted here for many years. Perhaps the code of this Lilliputian principality awards no capital punishment; this I forgot to inquire. The priests in this quarter are reputed gay, go out shooting, partake occasionally of Carnival diversions, and if they have any land, may till it themselves. My informer seemed rather to consider the last privilege as having something objectionable in it, the others as reasonable indulgences.

Few things are lovelier than part of the scenery between Monaco and Mentone. The road winds under gigantic rocks, vivified by the yellow bloom of the coronella, and looks down upon the baby capitol of this baby-beauty of a territory; the en-

sconcing rocks that bastion this little paradise are sometimes like giants' castles, and the world below looks so snug, and safe, and lovely, that a glow of happiness is communicated to the mind by the bare sight of it.

I have heard people say that we ought not to love the world—I mean the world of nature—too well; but I cannot believe it. Is not that love itself a religion, that leads by delightful steps to the most elevated and holy contemplations? But they say the steps ought not to be too delightful, they should not tempt us to linger too enjoyingly upon them; it might be so, if their beauty made us forget that they led to something better, but that can never happen; and is it to be believed that heaven has given us the faculty of admiration, the susceptibility of deep and pure enjoyment,—filling the green earth, the running waters, the blue and starry sky, with innumerable objects that feed such faculties with living nutriment, and yet that we are culpable in using them?

Warm enough at noon to make the sight at least of shade agreeable; all the verdure and glow of an early September day, and the sea breaking gently against the shore with regularly cadenced

sound and languid movement. Mentone beautifully placed, with a mountain screen drawn out behind it,—scathed-looking at a distance, but when near, finely jagged and with a rich shade upon it. Forests of olives of considerable size and beauty, and oleanders making shrubby avenues, or at least garnishing them. These six posts from Nice to Mentone are first-rate, and nothing disparaged (I think) by the sometimes rocky and desert aspect of the scene, which forms a fine contrast to the splendour of its general character. Our road winds along with the sea, and while we bask in a sun warm enough to ripen lemons, (the trees are full of them,) we have every now and then a glimpse of the Maritime Alps, appearing to be quite near to us. A tufted plant of a full rich green carpets the rocks luxuriantly; oleanders grow about in abundance, and the Indian fig, the orange, and the aloe, are as much at home as the thistle.

Turned into a stony valley crossed by a bridge, and there met a family journeying along, a widow, probably, with her children. The mother a hale woman, with a sun-burnt face that had seen trouble, but had worked through it cheerfully, trudged

along stoutly on foot, helping the mule, that made part of the company, forward now and then with a hearty push, or a twitch from a branch that she held in her hand. In this labour she was aided by a boy with a sharp southern eye and crisped hair, on which his red cap sat jauntily; while another, some years younger, ran barefooted by her side, helping her to a fresh bramble from the rocks whenever she dropped her own, which she did twice in adjusting the large white handkerchief that stood out as a shade from her face or flapped into it, as it happened, disclosing at intervals the sprig of flowers that decorates all heads here, old and young. The sack, which served as a saddle, had been given up to the daughter, the delicate and petted child, whose pale face was shaded by a large Indian-looking straw hat, negligently placed over a black net: a little boy, the youngest of the family, sat beside her clinging to her waist, his naked feet dangling, and flowers stuck between his toes.

I love to meet family groupes—when they seem held together by a family spirit,—pursuing their way peacefully; but when they go wrangling along, as sometimes happens, I wish them wiser,

and look the other way. There was much love—and faith too, in these poor people, who were evidently pilgrims; for the sick girl had three crosses and a bleeding heart (all in painted paper) pinned upon her shawl, and the mother and elder boy each a round contrivance, such as in Ireland is called a Patrick's cross, stuck upon them. Farther on we met troops of people decorated in the same way.

The road is now a mere shelf in good condition, often lifted to a startling height above the sea; at one side clinging to the rocks, and without any safeguard at the other,—neither hedge or tree, bush or briar. Yet travellers pass it at night, and only one accident is as yet on record. A desperate descent from Vingtimiglia. Walked through the town, to avoid going down it in the carriage,—an old, odd sort of place, descending boldly from a fortress to a river, but full of Italian character. At the top of the hill lay a man in a large cradle, wrapped, like Lazarus, in grave-clothes, his face Egyptian yellow, and the withered hand faintly extended;—a figure for the pool of Bethesda, or the way-side out of Jericho.

No doubting now (as at Nice) whether we are in Provence or in Italy; every thing here testifies,

even the little shops, all overflowing with maccaroni and the yellow family of pastes. Saw a rare head tied up Cleopatra fashion, in a deep orange-tawny handkerchief; it belonged to a girl of the poorer class, and was the handsomest thing that I have seen for many a day; handsome by the remarkable combination of features and expression, without the least setting off of what is called complexion. Beauties are not rare in Italy, but well-looking women exceedingly so.*

Hitherto our shelf—though none of the safest, has been a good road; but soon after Vingtimiglia it degenerates. Olive-orchards at each side, and then a flat tract with a suspicion of miasma in it—perhaps a certainty. Square wells surrounded by low stone walls, such as the woman of Samaria sits upon in the old pictures, are frequent,—so are palm trees; there are nurseries of them about the next town, which is mounted up upon its hill like an old Etruscan city: most of the towns here are so placed. Palms again, and in such numbers, that they lose their desert air and grow sociable, which does not at all become them; they are cul-

* I have made the same remark elsewhere, (page 403, vol. i.,) with respect to the Spaniards.

tivated here as an article of commerce, and their branches sent to Rome for church decorations on certain days of ceremony. A nursery of palms is an ugly thing, especially when bound up as these are, like hospital patients; but one alone has a fine eastern look, and confers dignity on common objects.

To-day the sea is sparkling and animated; barks with their bent sails, crowding canvas enough to overset a brig, yet keeping on steadily; ships sailing towards the sun, others gliding along in the shade, and light waves, like liquid chrysolites, chasing each other. As we wind along the coast, looking always at the sea, I often find myself thinking of Shakspeare's *Tempest;* and when something like an island, though it may be but a cloud, appears on its surface, fancying that it looks like the enchanted home of Prospero and Miranda. I am always thankful for such thoughts and fancies, and love to keep them with me as long as they will stay; finding that they have something of the charm which breathes in every line of that exquisite creation. There are things in the *Tempest* which it is wonderful to find written in words, tempered humanly to the capacity of man; things

that seem as if they had been brought to the rapt mind by some spirit who had dwelt in the pearl palaces below the waves, and knew the hall of stars above them. I seldom see any thing that elevates or touches my mind, without thinking of some passage in Shakspeare; and delightful it is to recall his golden fancies, and the music of his speech, amidst scenes whose magic harmonizes with their power and sweetness.

Entered St Remo by a street so narrow, that the carriage almost rasped the walls at each side; there are wider ones, and the town is of some size, with dark forbidding vistas, palaces, hovels, arches, palm trees, I think an aqueduct, or something like the remains of one, and a hundred other characteristic features. Italy is all feature in its worst, as well as in its best points: in this speaking country, all that does not excite admiration is not for that reason blank,—the exfoliated arch, the prostrate column, even the wide desolation of the Maremma awaken thought; and if there be but a spark of poetry in the mind, it is sure to be elicited by its collision with objects that, whether they be of our yesterday or the yesterday of other times, belong alike to memory; to that memory

which embalms without disfiguring, and in which the spirit of beauty still lives, as its colouring does in the glowing plumage of a bird whose limbs are stiffened in death.

Who ever talks of Italy as a living country? No one. Its vital beauty, its present pleasures, all—even while we enjoy them, seem to drop into the urn of the past; but from that urn rise shadows strong in power and spell,—illusions which make poetry of the bladed grass, and romance almost of wretchedness.

A bleak inn at St. Remo.* It was once a jesuit convent, and we are lodged, I should think, in the church, with the lateral chapels turned into bedrooms. My dormitory must be between twenty and thirty feet high; two curtainless beds, five chairs, and a table compose its furniture: on one side hangs a Magdalen with a ball chaplet of white roses; on the other Santa Lucia, with her eyes spitted on a skewer like a brace of larks, and placed on a plate before her, which does not prevent her from having another pair in her head, with which she contemplates their predecessors.

* Now shut up; better accommodation at the Hôtel de la Poste, but no picture.

Besides these we have better things—a comfortable dinner, a blazing hearth, and clean beds. Olive-wood is here, as at Nice, the general fuel, to which a few large fir-cones make a delightful addition; these cones are used commonly as matches, and being impregnated with oil, blaze when ignited like lighted torches. No candlesticks, but in their stead three brass lamps of a beautiful antique form, with which engravings have made us familiar. Changes are operated slowly in Italy; we have still the costumes of the old painters, the lamps and water-pots of Herculaneum, and the rich unmodernised faces.

While I undressed, a cavalier on the other side of a thin door thrummed the guitar dolefully,—fancied it might be Don Gaston de Cogollos, or something like him; but was disenchanted this morning by the appearance of an elderly tax-gatherer, whose Helen is probably the presiding divinity of some Spaccio di Vino, or Vendita di Sale e Tabacchi.

What with beggars and idlers, we could scarcely make our way to the carriage; but there were two heads amongst them—wonderful ones! with such exquisite chiselling about the lips, and such shad-

ing round the eyes! One pair of those eyes were topaz, inclining to green, (cat's colour,) put in, as children say, with dirty fingers; eyelashes full half an inch long, the other velvet-black, and shaped like split almonds, with long soft eyebrows following their line. Both belonged to beggars, and very troublesome ones.

To day a fine sweeping coast, but more barren than usual until a moment ago, when we turned into a bay with three wee towns or villages locked within it; one still exhibiting traces of an earthquake, which played at cup and ball with the houses two years ago. Farther on, two huge birds lie floating on the waves at a little distance from shore, looking as sleepy and almost as large as seals. Dominique calls them sea geese; they may be mermaids for any thing he knows. Suspect malaria, from the occasional look of the country, and the general one of the people.

What amazing brightness in the sky—what golden beauty! I cannot believe it winter: there is something in the aspect of the heavens so rejoicing, as if "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." There is usually something pensive in the brightness of a

calm winter sky, something in harmony with the repose of earth, the silence of birds, the dumbness of suspended vegetation. But to-day the heavens glorify, the clouds hymn out praise, and the mute earth listens in reverence.

After San Lorenzo, (I think it is,) Porto Maurizio opens in the distance, all the towns here are finely placed, but this imperially. It rises from a rock like a city of white marble, lifted upon arches, and hangs in the air amidst its pines and cypresses; domes and spires terminate its form pyramidically, and rich masses of olive darken round its base. At a distance it seems to form a link between two promontories; but when approached, we find it on a promontory of its own, entirely detached from other neighbourhood. But these beautiful pictures should not be seen too near; even Porto Maurizio, pre-eminent in dignity as it is, does not bear inspection: looked into, the marble becomes stucco, the narrow steep streets lose their aëreal character, and the whole much of the magic which distance has bestowed upon it.

According to the necessity imposed on invalids, we never begin our day's journey till the morning is thoroughly aired, nor continue it longer than

three or four o'clock; the worst part of which arrangement is, that we are obliged to halt at bad inns instead of whisking by them. Last night we would willingly have escaped Oneglia, but were obliged to stop there: a cheerless inn and a smoky chimney, but reckoned (I believe) amongst the *respectables* of the road. Symptoms of Genoa,—white veils and a street paved with flag-stones; but, according to our rate of going, we are a day and a half away from it yet. A tremendous hill, and unfenced, from Oneglia—the sea still, and the sky still—and black too, except where the curtain rises towards the east, and discovers a wide inner roof of golden saffron.

A look back at Porto Maurizio, and a rare one, through the olives that slope down to the sea,—common buildings looking like the peristyles of Claude Loraine, with all his golden splendour and overflowing light upon them. As we approach Diaro, the road sweeps round a lofty projection, and we come down upon a spacious amphitheatre holding within the hollow of its wooded palm—towns churches, hamlets, placed as if nature had made a compact with man, and that each strove to embellish the other's works; and enclosing within its

curve a broad and graceful bay, with the town of Diaro spread round its edge, gay with painted houses, and domes variegated like Chinese pagodas. The Cornice abounds in houses of all colours, (yellow the favourite); and red and white churches looking mosque-like, some with ball-domes, or perforated towers, capped with wee cupolas. Flowers of beautiful form and colour still linger amidst the rocks, and the olive-boughs fall on each other like bales of soft cotton delicately stained. The leaf of the olive seems hard and sticky when near, but at a distance the effect is velvety; and when left to grow as nature wills it, and warmed by an Italian sun, has a beautiful cloudiness about it.

December 20th,—though fine, has a touch of October in it; hitherto it has been June, (a few dull clouds excepted,) but to-day we have some forerunners. The sea, though calm, is of an angry purple; flocks of gulls float like foam upon its surface, and a water-spout drops like a firm column into the waves, joining them with the heavens. Corsica is not far off, and here for the first time I have heard the marvellous story of the wild boars, who, wishing in one of their sportive moments to

try a bath, swam out to sea, and were taken, five at a time like a haul of salmon, at Cannes, thirty leagues from their starting-post. Nor was this spoken of as the unrepeated freak of a single summer's evening, but as an habitual recreation in which the boars of Corsica delight to indulge. Scenery (with the exception of a few fine points) not perhaps quite so admirable as it has been, but the sweeping bays are always splendid. Some one, who had more courage than I have, called them monotonous, but I dare not even think it; in the midst of such beauty and magnificence, it would be like finding fault with a rose-tree because its exquisite blossoms were all red.

This finely-imagined road was begun by the French, who, had they remained here long enough, would probably have left to Italy another monument of splendid perseverance. But it has been continued in a narrow spirit of jealousy: the king of Sardinia dreads the injury which it may do to Turin by turning travellers away from Mont Cenis, (formerly the only key to Italy during the winter or early spring months,) and opening a pass for them where nothing of the Alps remain but their beauty, —no ice, no snow, no cold; no risk of avalanche,

or of being blocked up in a house of refuge; but a mere glide from the warm climate of the south of France to the still more genial one of Italy, and that in the midst of scenery which for itself merits a pilgrimage. With this dread upon him, he forbids all improvements; will have no fence, no bridges, and no widening of the road to enable two carriages to pass. Even in cases where the commune offers to pay the expenses, and only asks for leave, he still refuses it. Such, at least, is the story which we have heard all along the road, and which seems borne out by evidence; for there are no parapets where there is most need of them, and should two carriages meet, one is at a loss to imagine how the matter could be managed, turning or backing being equally out of the question in an unfenced road, without a foot of ground beyond the wheel. Besides, the road is crossed at intervals (and sometimes very short ones) by rivers, which when swollen, as they often are suddenly, and without signal, must be disagreeable and even dangerous impediments. At present they are dry, and we rumble through their rough beds as well as we can, for bridges there are none,—at least none except for foot passengers. In short, a true go-

vernment disregard of human life is exemplified throughout the whole of the pass, and one is surprised that neither Catholic gratitude or fear has erected a shrine on some sea-beat rock or acclivitous point to Nôtre Dame de la Délivrance.

Clouds again and pavilions of darkness in the heavens, as in the days of David. A bleakish coast onwards, and then a fine bay in which the town of Allassio and one or two others are sheltered. The one or two others are nothings, but Allassio is a fortified fishing-town, with two long maccaroni suburbs,—that is, suburbs which seem entirely devoted to the sale of that great article of home consumption; what rings and tape-worm varieties of yellow paste lie coiled within the windows, or stream out from them,—flat and round, thick and thin; for all tastes, all palates, and enough of each to victual a fleet. The prominent features of a small country town in France, (I mean a very small one,) are its café, billiard, débit de tabac, poste royale, boulevard promenade, and neat women. Of an Italian one, its fine (or showy) church, maccaroni shops, vendite of tobacco and salt, and loitering population; often its marble remains, sometimes its living beauty, and always its beggars. There

are no islands along this shore, nothing of magnitude enough for the name; but now and then a rocky islet, with or without a tower, looks like some lonely fragment cast out from the land, and left, like a deserted heart, to find its own anchorage.

I cannot but fancy that this part of the coast, with its towns lying along the shore, or hoisted up among the rocks, must be like the Morea; perhaps not—perhaps it may be richer, or more beautiful; but there are such centuries of melody in the old word Greece, that its music has become magic; and when we hear that its shores are cold and bleak, we refuse to believe it, and will only see it in the dress with which it has been invested by the light of glory, and the charm of poetry. All the little towns here seem to think themselves connected with the Levant; one half of their cafés are " del Cairo," and we often see just such heads as one might expect to meet with at Smyrna or at Gaza. Another port opens beneath our road, and as we wind down the hills a ship sails into it; while my eye follows its course, I please myself with fancying where it comes from, what shores it may have coasted, at what peopled bay or solitary island it may have touched; whether it brings

spices from the Moluccas, silks from Aleppo, or dates from Egypt. A good-humoured woman once said to me, "I never see a merchant-ship, without thinking of the master flogging the cabin-boy;" an ugly real life image, which one gladly exchanges for the sweet early Robinson Crusoe dreams of flowery islands, whose fragrance still seems wafted from the deck of the adventurous vessel.

A fine engrafting of verdure on the rocks, and now and then a look on the sea through the pines that start out from the cliffs almost horizontally, mixed up with olives and the caroubier, whose bright, bright green and full close foliage greatly enrich the wood scenery. Sometimes the road passes through olive-grounds, that have a forest depth of shade and perspective. Many mean houses have their doors framed in marble, often white marble sculptured. Marble, and orange-trees, and all that full-dressed vegetation, those plants of luxury which with us denote the riches of the possessor, are here mixed up with the uncontestable signs of negligence and poverty. Observed a singular effect of atmosphere,—the line of the horizon utterly lost, and a ship that was sailing on its edge, seeming to ride along in the heavens.

While I looked at it, a beggar-girl on her way to overtake the walkers of our party, who were half a mile a-head, took a passing chance with me. She never slept, (she said,) having a blind mother for whom her fingers went working all the night long, and by day she begged. I never saw a gayer soul; jumping all the time she talked with an air as fresh and new-born, as if she had never heard "the chimes at midnight;" so I looked doubtingly, and she, catching my look, burst out laughing and jumped still higher. It was evidently a hoax, and she enjoyed it quite as much as the hope of the baiochi. The lower class of Italians are never ashamed of being caught tricking, on the contrary they soften the disappointment by making a joke of it. If a man asks a false price for any thing and is found out, he laughs heartily, and takes what you offer him.

Albenga is approached by an avenue of now leafless trees, starred off with others, and this summer-feature in its barrenness, and the Maritime Alps (which appear quite close to us) in their snows, form the only winter picture we have yet seen. Frightened at the first view of the dirty locanda; imagined rats and all other annoyances

in its worm-eaten furniture, but saw none, and were less wretchedly off than we expected. A flat country about Albenga,—a summer country of vines and olives, soft meadows and quiet beauty, wild hills beautifully tinted, a light bridge, a clear shallow river, making its babbling way on to the sea; but the episcopal city itself (at least what we saw of it) dirty and wretched looking.

It was between Albenga and Finale that the troubadour Rambaud de Vasqueiras, employed by the noble Marquis de Montferrat to rescue the fair Jacobina, came up with and carried her off from the fantassins and cavaliers who were bearing her to Sardinia, there to marry her by force to him whom her iniquitous uncle would have sacrificed her to. We are now journeying along the same ground, but have not as yet fallen in with any runaways, or indeed any human beings except a brisk ragazzo, and a still brisker ragazza, who are trotting on before us, not seeming to need or wish for the interference of either marquis or troubadour. And now comes the Cravasopa, the Chimborazo of the Cornice; steep, unfenced, and coming down upon Finale magnificently, with a road convolving like a serpent's tail, making stages for the eye, and

running down with it from resting-place to resting-place into the green sea,—green to-day as an emerald. The opening of the bay is splendid: the town of Finale lies sparkling along the shore, and farther on another and another whiten in the distance; we seem to hang in the sky, and look down into the beautiful heart of the hollow, upon the sea, the town, the gardens, as if through a diminishing-glass, that in reducing objects to a fairy scale, gave them additional sharpness and lustre. We walked down the mountain, pausing frequently on the magical scene before us. I almost wished that I had never seen the Mediterranean before, it would have been so fine to have burst upon it here.

Beautiful sea! how thy deep bosom shines
Like liquid amethyst,—purple to-day,
To-morrow blue perhaps, as the sky wills,
But always full of beauty and of thought.
This is the sea that bath'd the ancient Greece,
Washing caressingly the marble fanes
Of her cold fabulous gods; or the pale shrines
Where beauty, 'gender'd of poetic thought
And bodied into almost living warmth,
Received perverted homage. Barren spot,
Morsel of earth—yet nursing-soil to legions.
Heroes and sages were thy common growth,

Poets thy flow'rs of amaranthine stock,
Deep-hued, abounding, and immortal too,
Of noblest strength and most exceeding grace.

This is the sea that bath'd the Roman soil,
Where iron conquerors borrowed the soft arts
Of gentler Greece, to graft their names upon:
And—prouder honour—from its antique shores
Rose holy cities, treasuries of faith,
Where the true worship of the only God
Was tabernacled, kept inviolate,
Never forgot, till on that self-same land
He showed himself to man,—*He*, the long-hoped,
Long-looked for,—long-announced; the living word,
Promise and testimonial, act and seal.

Above this oft-sung sea, nightly the stars,
Which the Egyptian from his lonely tower
Watch'd as they rose and sunk, shone brightly down;
And the pale planets, whose revolvings taught
To ancient sages the lost lore which showed,
By certain presage gather'd from their scan,
The destiny of him whose fate they rule,
Gleam'd mildly. They are still there—those stars,
Those never dimming, bright eternities,
Out 'during nations, seeing people roll
Abjectly in the dust,—who were so proud;
Yet shining still on the pale desert earth,
Whose name was once another word for glory.

Out of the eastern lands thy waves have brought
The mystic sciences; the arts of peace,
Which open'd that sweet page of woman's life,
Where she is neither toy, or Amazon,

Lesbia, nor yet Camilla; but a creature
Form'd out of many blessings,—made to live,
Or die, if needful, with the heart she loves.

Much of thy glory's o'er,—but still thou art
A noble sea, bathing a lovely shore.
Beautiful here, as a dim dream of heaven;
Lovely yet lonely oft, though fairy piles,
That look like regal dwellings, hang upon
Thy splendid heights,—dungeons when nearer seen,
And tenanted by those who, rightly taught,
Govern'd, upheld, might still make good their claim
To share high ground with others. But to none
Yield they in kindness; that small spot of green
Within their hearts lives on through all their wrongs.

The town of Finale is glistening and pretty; white marble lavished on doors and windows, arcades, houses lifted up on arches, and at least one long street paved with broad flat stones. Beggars innumerable,—some "the tag-rags of mankind;" others in the white Genoese veil, or with the large scarf of flowered cotton thrown over the head. This flowered scarf, covered with purple rocks, and birds and branches of blue and crimson, in the way of the Indian palimpore, forms the only defence which the women of the country, who are obliged to expose themselves to all kinds of weather, seem to use against sun, wind, or rain. It is thrown

over the head, and falling low in the back, is wrapped across the bosom.

A prodigious coast, and such proud rocks, marble rocks, through which galleries are sometimes hollowed. I have said nothing of the Cornice galleries; some are in the rough rocky state, which best becomes them, and others (one at least) smoothed up with a neat lining of masons' work. They have not the gloom of Pausillipo, nor the grandeur (if my memory serves me right) of some others that I have seen; but the opening picture, and the bursting into light, is always striking. Those at the other side of Genoa are said to be more remarkable. Pretty gardens about Finale, and perfect models of neatness. A kitchen-garden in good order is always a pleasing object; its regular arrangement reposes the eye, its variegated green delights it; the idea of usefulness is agreeably connected with the sight of beauty; we see the rich fruit in its gay blossoms, and discern the nutritious vegetable in its sprouting leaves. I have no where seen the culture of the kitchen-garden more carefully attended to than in Italy.

Loitered at Noli, one of the most inviting of the small shining towns that bask on the sea-

shore: its domineering castle, old walls, square towers, and painted houses, blend into a striking picture; to which the boats, the nets, bright pebbly strand, and busy fishermen give life. These fishermen wear a kind of friar's hood, but narrow and pointed, attached to their short rough coats, and when they pull it over their heads look like stage demons, rather grisly in the distance. I wish the women were not so dirty, for they are often handsome, and in a fine style of handsomeness; but they are such slatterns that their redundant hair is a serious disadvantage to them, even though decorated as it usually is by a red pink, or a natural leaf of geranium. The children along this coast are sometimes lovely, but when pale and squalid, look all the more sickly for their mature eye-brows and long lashes. Savona (where we slept) charmingly placed: women veiled, or wrapped in their palimpores, which have a grand air when advantageously arranged. When we were going off this morning, a priest was standing in the gateway, receiving the homage of two respectable looking men, who spoke to him bare-headed. I never saw such a rayed-out figure; there was more pomp embroidered into the hem of his gar-

ment, than other saints wear on their stomachers. I asked a bystander who he was: "A great man, (he replied,) who has had letters from the king."

"On what subject?"

"I believe about the hospital."

This put me in mind of the boy who boasted that George the Third had spoken to him.—"And what did he say to you?" said his doubting companions: "Get out of the way, you dog!"

The tongue is here decidedly the active member; the body seems to have entered into a family compact against exertion, but the tongue is always alert and oily. One Italian makes as much noise as six Frenchmen. Cannon excepted, there was less uproar in the streets of Paris on the fifth of June, than was made by about twenty wrangling peasants under our windows this morning: they literally bellowed, and seemed as if they had a hearty desire to murder each other, but the next moment were the best friends in the world. This effervescent tendency apart, the Italians are a pleasant people, full of kindness, and so beautifully natural,—never betraying the wish of appearing any thing but what they are. A delightful smell of pitch and tar (delightful to those who love it as

I do) at the next town, a ship-building place, of which I have forgotten the name. A bustling scene; tartanes and polacres on the stocks, flax-beating, rope-making, sail-mending,—all going on together; loads of things for Copley Fielding, and no lack of industry either in the pottery line. Charming strands, but these pebbly stretches are a great and general beauty of the Cornice shore. A detached rock, spare as a watch-tower, rises up from the strand, with a cross upon its summit, and an image of the Virgin beneath. These rude emblems of sincere faith, humbly propitiating help or devoutly expressing gratitude, are often seen on the Mediterranean coast of Italy, and never by me without an emotion which gorgeous monuments do not always awaken. Gleams, and more than gleams, of Genoa and its fine deep-toned mountains leading off into the distance; ragged villages,—but affecting literary reminiscences. I remarked on one lane, "Vico de l'Ariosto;" and on another, "Vico di L. A. Muratori." An agreeable villa or two hereabouts, not shaded by orange groves, (Italian villas are rarely shaded by any thing,) but based in them. No head too old for a sprig of geranium or a Bengal rose: one woman

had a large, deep-yellow flower of the dahlia kind in her black hair, and looked as handsome in her tawny decoration as Mademoiselle Navarre could have done, when she burst into Marmontel's room in her garland of jonquils.

Literally assailed by beggars, who came thronging round us and striking violently against the carriage-windows as if they would say, 'refuse me, if you dare;' women flying at us with their distaffs, and girls screaming out 'illustrious, beautiful, charitable ladies,' till they are as hoarse as ravens.

I have known people who were afraid of a beggar's curse: an Italian beggar's would be an awful one. Here, and all over Italy, the people are noble and graceful in their attitudes: a blind woman asked alms of us, extending her right arm and spreading out her open palm in a grand statue-like way, as if she conferred rather than solicited a favour. Their expressions too are sometimes remarkable: a beggar who once followed us on a road near Florence, finding that his petition was not attended to in any way, exclaimed, "Tell me, at least, that you will give me nothing, and let me go in peace."

At this moment, while I scribble my notes, a

woman with a child in her arms asks alms of me with her eyes; and then turning them on the baby, looks at it as if her soul had gone out from her, and lived in the life of another. No speech could be so eloquent: every movement said,—"Look at this child; it is for him that I beg, not for myself."

Absent from Italy, it becomes a vision; I forget its details of wrong and wretchedness, its page of desolation, its idleness, its ignorance, and their causes. It seems to me a world set in with stars, instinct with light;—living torches in the grass, in the woods nightingales, in the reeds music, in the air fragrance. A paradise peopled with great spirits; we do not see them, but we feel their presence; it is over all, in all; its influence is universal,—beneficent as light, holy as virtue, sweet as love. I call it in my heart "the lady of kingdoms," and wonder at the prodigality of nature and the skill of man. But coming again into the midst of its beauties, I see the plague-spot that spreads over and consumes them, the leprosy of sloth and superstition, which neither "the cedar wood, nor the hyssop, nor the scarlet, nor the living bird dipped ten times in the blood of the slain bird and

the running water," nor any other spell except that which a wise and just government has the power of exercising, can make clean.

Again lifted up above the olive-groves, and looking through their branches at the gliding bark or desolate round-towers. These dismantled forts appear often at intervals on their jutting rock or solitary strand, offering an asylum to the bat and the bittern. At Cogoletto, a fishing-village, made showy by a painted church and a cluster of painted houses, it is now believed that Columbus was born. If it be true, as a stone put up outside the town asserts, that it indeed is "la patrimonia di Colombo," a great spirit came into life within its humble walls,—a spirit sepulchred in the memories of all who are capable of appreciating amazing reach of mind, grandeur of purpose, and heroic perseverance in the accomplishment of great designs, whose bare conception was enough for immortality,—and that against all the obstacles which jealousy and injustice could build up against them.

The best inn on the Cornice is at Savona. Have had Genoa in view ever since we left that town,—bright Genoa, lying under its dark mountains;

others are seen in the distance vague and veiled, stretching out into the sea. In three days we shall have Christmas, yet if it were not for the young oaks and their crisp dry leaves, and some other trees of ephemeral beauty which mix their bare branches with the wear-and-tear verdure of the pine and olive, we might believe it May, and even a southern May,—not a draggle-tailed one like our spattered queen, who generally sends about her circulars on the first day of her month, putting off gala, hawthorn, rose-buds and all, until June, and sprinkling the poor sweeps till their feathers and fringes take the colouring of the kennel, and literally drop puddle.

And yet as I write my conscience smites me, and acting as a flapper to my memory, brings back some charming May-days of my early youth, when I wove garlands and wore them. Those who weave and wear them now, probably still see the "flowery May" come "dancing from the east;" for them her showers drop balm, and her tardy humour seems but sweet delay; while we who lag behind cry out, "Fair month of May, when wilt thou return?" and hear her answer mournfully, "Never! never!"* In short, we ourselves

change, and so fancy the seasons change with us; while, perhaps, (notwithstanding the affidavit of the sweeps,) May-flowers still bud as early, and blossom as brightly as ever, and the fault may lie, —not with the poet's month, but with those whose feelings, like the works of a worn-out watch, no longer keep time.

We now approach the last sweep of the glorious Cornice, this wonderful stretch of sea and shore, which lights up the mind with its splendour, and fills the heart with a crowd of sweet and blended emotions. The extent of this superb line is about one hundred and thirty miles, the road really a cornice, cut out from the rocks and overhanging the sea of wonderful recollections; always following the line of coast as it stretches out into promontories or recedes into bays, with a gracefulness of inflection equal to its powers and boldness, and through scenes whose sublime character strengthens rather than subdues their beauty. I have talked of painted towns, warm bays, and pebbly strands—broad lines of glistening silver when the sun shines on them; but the sudden sun-breaks on the distant mountains, the

* "Joli mois de Mai, quand reviendras-tu ?
Jamais ! jamais !"

broad shadows, the veiled lights, the ineffable colouring of Italy, must be seen to enable one to form an idea of its beauty. Imagination, which so often outruns reality, is here distanced by it.

It is to these lights that Italy owes the hold which her scenery takes of the imagination. Here the heavens are a party in the beauty of the earth. Where are they not so, it may be said? True, but here they turn the scale; every cloud, every sunbeam, changes the aspect of her mountains; the most permanent of nature's works seem to become transient, changeful, effaceable; their solid forms appear to dissolve in light or to eclipse in shadow, but only to burst out again in that unimaginable splendour, which, as if it shunned to be too powerful, draws a fine veil over its brightness, and allows the eye to contemplate its glory. Hard, cold, glaring, are words that have no meaning in the mountain countries of Italy; here the air warms into the soft glow of visible beauty, and the harmony of colouring affects the eye as that of sound does the ear, taking it captive by its sweetness.

In Switzerland the mountains sit heavily on their foundations; in Italy they have an aëreal

look, as if they had less root in the earth; they are more visionary, more like the dissolving magic of a dream. When the former change their character of high-toned and powerful reality, it is to assume the gaunt and phantom shapes in which they visit our startled sight; when the shades of night or the cold moonshine falls upon them, then they are like the frontiers of chaos; while the latter rise against the heavens like the "verdurous walls of paradise."

With such a country before them, such an open book,—memory on one page, beauty almost divine on another, and inspiration (one should think) on all; such things to love, to lose, to struggle for, to glory in, how is it, many will will say, that the Italians of the present day do so little? Thought creates action, its impetus awakens the energies of the mind; perhaps it sleeps amidst the fulness of beauty, perhaps in the enjoyment of gratified sensation; enough of the *good* is felt, to account for that shrinking from the effort which must be made to obtain the *better*.

Yet Raffaelle did not sleep, nor Michael Angelo, —nor the great Sforza, or still greater Columbus. Did Tasso sleep, or Ariosto, or the immortal

Dante? or hundreds of others whose bright names are sown in stars?* And yet the same gorgeous sky shone above them, the same illuminated page lay open before their eyes. No, it cannot be the atmosphere, nor the sky, nor the immortal beauty, all-satisfying though it may be, which enervates the mind and paralyses its movements; but that permanent evil, of which I have already spoken,—the want of a wise, enlightened, and applicable government. A good government, founded on the principles of justice and rational liberty, which encourages the advancement of knowledge, and protects the means of moral improvement, is the most effectual promoter of enlightened views, and their results. A bad one,—when so bad as to rouse even the indolent and complacent to a sense of wrong and an earnest desire of right, has often produced the same effect on minds fitted by the experience of evil to struggle for good, and estimate its value. That the Italians of the present day do little, is true; but the charge of inertness is applicable only to the

* I say nothing of the old Romans, for I do not intend to enter into a disquisition, but merely to note a thought which admits of being more largely developed.

mass of the people, who, in their profound ignorance, suffer without knowing that they are oppressed, and who in that same ignorance have lost the knowledge of the high example left them by their great ancestors. But who can doubt that there still exist in this fair land spirits worthy of it, noble and enlightened ones, fitted to work out its regeneration? and who, though fettered, are yet not impotent nor speechless, though compelled to practise silence?

I can easily conceive that where all is *spectacle* as in Italy, man may become so much a spectator, that his character may assimilate itself with the part, and his mind lose—if not the faculty of action, at least the habit. In Italy there is so much to wonder at, to delight in, that the springs of original thought may be weakened by the constant emotions of wonder, pleasure, and admiration. Reflection is naturally turned into channels through which the reflections of thousands have already past; thought is oftener perhaps indulged than created, or put in motion; or should it be exercised, it is chiefly on antiquarian conjecture, or the comparative excellence of the higher works of art. Man looks on, and revels in the contempla-

tion of what other men have done; until, absorbed in the ravishing study, he forgets that he himself has powers, whose moment of action is passing away—perhaps for ever.

Perhaps the grey and solemn scenery of the north may have a character about it more calculated to foster meditation than the glow and splendour of the south, whose beauties seem to belong rather to the domain of fancy. In the south we enjoy; in the north, enjoyment not being always within reach, we reflect; and in reflecting, call out those faculties of the mind which are the elements of intellectual action. In the south the banquet is always before us, the cup for ever at our lips; the inhabitant of a country to which nature has been prodigal confides in her promises, and often throws his powers of mind upon the stream of life, to be carried along as it lists; while he, whom fate has planted in the coyer north, must work, and often springs a mine in doing so.

Our road at this moment runs away from the sea, and we wind along amidst hills that have hamlets, and churches, and farm-houses thrown about on them; and a fore-ground of vines, with trees scattered singly, or raised up grove-like on banks.

The Genoa fashion of supporting the vine on slight pilasters prevails here, and when the leaves are out, and the tendrilled branches fall down in rich volutes, the effect is beautiful, and not unpleasing even now. Iron-works and some handsome houses distinguish Voltri, and now comes a succession of villages and hamlets closing in so fast upon each other, that we seem to have entered the suburbs of Genoa miles before the city presents itself. Three notes of admiration for the sunset that we leave behind us at the corner of the Fanal,—it deserves them all. How this magnificent Genoa glows and sparkles in it! but as we advance twilight drops like a curtain on us, and the glimmering palace, the buzz of overflowing streets, the clamour of human voices, and the noise of evening drums, succeed to the light of the sun and the silence of nature. I know of nothing like the first burst of Genoa when the colouring of the air is favourable to the grave and imperial character of its beauty, but I have said so much of it elsewhere,* that I must be silent now.

I have dwelt on the Cornice because that in such scenes delay is indulgence, and because it is

* "Slight Reminiscences of the Rhine, &c."

not only pre-eminently beautiful, but still new. By and by travellers will discover the advantages of escaping the Alpine snows, and of journeying in the depth of winter through summer scenes in a summer atmosphere,—scenes of amazing grandeur and consummate beauty; and then the Cornice will be a beaten track, like other beaten tracks in this dear Italy, and will have lost its freshness even while it retains the power of awakening new ideas in the minds of those who contemplate its rare magnificence.

After wandering long in Italy, we have come back again, with our imaginations full of its immortal beauty, to the green valleys and eagle mountains of the Pyrenees; charmed more than ever with the sweetness of the one, more than ever impressed with the majesty of the other: finding here the same magical light that we had left behind us, the same aëreal colouring, the same southern sky and bountiful nature, with an individual physiognomy of beauty which, if it belongs less to the great story of the past than that of Italy, if it has not the deep and profoundly touch-

ing character of moral melancholy impressed upon the general aspect of the scenery in that divine land, possesses in its noble identity a high and powerful charm, and in its exceeding beauty, its fresh and romantic loveliness, (welcomed again and rapturously both by the heart and fancy,) another that need not shrink from a comparison with whatever nature has formed of fairest and most engaging.

I have sketched the Pyrenees as I found them; not daring to hope that I have done justice to their infinite beauty, but earnestly wishing to make it (as far as my small help can do so) better known in a country, where all that is grand or lovely in nature is perhaps more deeply felt, more ge ally appreciated, than in any other.

THE END.

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